AQA Approaches in Psychology Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide

Everything you need from our exam experts!

Table of Contents

Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

• Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
• Improve accuracy and speed,
• Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
• Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 – 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

1. **According to the biological approach, which of the following factors is considered to influence behaviour?**

   A. Genes

   B. Brain structure and nervous system

   C. Hormones and neurotransmitters

   D. All of the above

2. **Which best describes the central nervous system?**

   A. It regulates hormonal release in peripheral glands only.

   B. It includes the brain and spinal cord and regulates both basic physiological processes and higher cognitive functions.

   C. It transmits messages solely from the brain to the body.

   D. It consists only of the brain.

3. **What is a common criticism of applying the scientific method to psychology?**

   A. It is always perfect

   B. Not all psychologists believe that the scientific method is the best way to study human behaviour

   C. It cannot measure emotional states

   D. It ignores animal research

4. **What term describes copying the behaviour of others?**

   A. Imitation

   B. Identification

   C. Modelling

   D. Vicarious reinforcement

5. **Watson and Rayner's Little Albert study aimed to determine whether humans learn through classical conditioning and whether fear can be conditioned in a child.**

   A. To determine if humans learn via classical conditioning and can have fears conditioned in a child.

   B. To test operant conditioning in toddlers.

   C. To observe natural temperament in infants.

   D. To measure IQ changes after conditioning.

6. **What does behavioural shaping refer to in operant conditioning?**

    A. Teaching something gradually by reinforcing successive approximations.

    B. Providing continuous reinforcement every time.

    C. Extinguishing a behavior through punishment.

    D. Modeling behavior after a role model.

7. **Which term is associated with inherited characteristics that can be passed to offspring?**

    A. Genotype

    B. Evolution

    C. Phenotype

    D. Adaptation

8. **Humanistic counselling is best described as**

    A. Client-centered

    B. Therapist-led and directive

    C. Diagnosis-focused

    D. Behavioral conditioning model

9. **Which techniques are used in psychodynamic therapy?**

    A. Free association and dream analysis

    B. Desensitization and flooding

    C. Observational learning and modeling

    D. Cognitive restructuring and behavioral rehearsal

10. **Which evolutionary mechanism explains the peacock's tail despite predation risk?**

    A. Gene flow

    B. Genetic drift

    C. Sexual selection

    D. Stabilizing selection

Answers

1. D
2. B
3. B
4. A
5. A
6. A
7. C
8. A
9. A
10. C

Explanations

1. **According to the biological approach, which of the following factors is considered to influence behaviour?**

   A. Genes

   B. Brain structure and nervous system

   C. Hormones and neurotransmitters

   D. All of the above

   In the biological view of psychology, behaviour is shaped by multiple interacting biological processes. Genes provide inherited instructions that can influence traits and predispositions. Brain structure and the nervous system determine how information is processed, decisions are made, and responses are coordinated. Hormones and neurotransmitters regulate neural activity, affecting mood, arousal, motivation, and behavior. Because these elements work together—genetic influences shaping brain development, brain activity affecting chemical balance, and chemicals modulating neural function—the factors listed all contribute to behaviour. So the best answer is that all of the above influence behaviour.

2. **Which best describes the central nervous system?**

   A. It regulates hormonal release in peripheral glands only.

   B. It includes the brain and spinal cord and regulates both basic physiological processes and higher cognitive functions.

   C. It transmits messages solely from the brain to the body.

   D. It consists only of the brain.

   The central nervous system is made up of the brain and spinal cord, and its job is to receive, process, and respond to information. It coordinates automatic bodily functions such as breathing, heart rate, and digestion through the autonomic system, while also handling higher-level tasks like thinking, planning, and memory. This combination—regulating basic physiological processes and supporting complex cognition—is why this description fits best. The other statements miss important parts: one focuses only on hormones, which is primarily the endocrine system; another says it transmits messages only from brain to body, ignoring that it also receives sensory information and processes it; and another says it consists only of the brain, ignoring the spinal cord.

3. What is a common criticism of applying the scientific method to psychology?

A. It is always perfect

B. Not all psychologists believe that the scientific method is the best way to study human behaviour

C. It cannot measure emotional states

D. It ignores animal research

The main idea here is that psychology uses a scientific approach, but there's a debate about whether that approach is the best or only way to study human behavior. Some psychologists argue that science provides rigorous, generalizable findings, while others say that human experience, meaning, and social context aren't fully captured by experiments and measurements alone. So the common criticism is that the scientific method isn't universally viewed as the best way to study everything in psychology, and many researchers advocate using a mix of methods, including qualitative and interpretive approaches, to get a fuller picture. Other statements miss the point: science isn't considered perfectly sufficient for all questions, and emotions can be studied using reliable methods (self-report, physiology, behavioral indicators). Psychology also does not ignore animal research; it has long incorporated animal studies to inform understanding of behavior and neuroscience.

4. What term describes copying the behaviour of others?

A. Imitation

B. Identification

C. Modelling

D. Vicarious reinforcement

Copying observed behaviour is imitation. This is the action of reproducing what you've seen someone else do, a core part of observational learning where learning happens by watching and then performing the same behaviour. After paying attention to a model, retaining what was observed, reproducing the action, and having motivation to imitate, the behaviour is copied. Identifying with a model is about feeling similar or connected to the person, which can make imitation more likely, but it isn't the act of copying itself. Modelling refers to the demonstration or showing of a behaviour as a potential example to learn from, not the act of copying. Vicarious reinforcement involves learning from the observed rewards or punishments that someone else receives, which can influence whether imitation occurs later, but it isn't the copying action itself.

5. Watson and Rayner's Little Albert study aimed to determine whether humans learn through classical conditioning and whether fear can be conditioned in a child.

A. To determine if humans learn via classical conditioning and can have fears conditioned in a child.

B. To test operant conditioning in toddlers.

C. To observe natural temperament in infants.

D. To measure IQ changes after conditioning.

The idea being tested is that emotional responses like fear can be learned through a process where a neutral stimulus becomes associated with a frightening event—classic conditioning in humans. Watson and Rayner aimed to show that a child could acquire fear by pairing something neutral (the white rat) with something aversive (a loud noise). If the rat comes to provoke fear on its own after conditioning, that demonstrates that humans can learn fears through classical conditioning, which is exactly what this option states. This focus is distinct from operant conditioning, which looks at how behaviors are shaped by consequences (rewards or punishments). It's also not about natural temperament, which would involve observing innate traits without conditioning. And it isn't about measuring IQ or cognitive changes after conditioning. The option that aligns with the study's goal is the one that asserts both learning via classical conditioning and the conditioning of fear in a child.

6. What does behavioural shaping refer to in operant conditioning?

A. Teaching something gradually by reinforcing successive approximations.

B. Providing continuous reinforcement every time.

C. Extinguishing a behavior through punishment.

D. Modeling behavior after a role model.

Shaping in operant conditioning is the process of teaching a new or complex behavior by reinforcing successive approximations toward the target response. Rather than waiting for the exact behavior to occur, reinforcement is given for behaviors that move closer to what is wanted, and the criteria are gradually raised so the learner advances step by step to the final behavior. This approach is especially useful when the target action is not in the learner's current repertoire or would be difficult to perform in one step, such as training an animal to perform a sequence of actions or teaching a child a new skill. Continuous reinforcement, used to establish a behavior by rewarding every instance, is a different method and isn't the same as shaping. Extinguishing a behavior through punishment and modeling by imitation involve different processes (removing reinforcement to reduce behavior, or learning by observing others), not the incremental reinforcement of closer and closer approximations.

7. Which term is associated with inherited characteristics that can be passed to offspring?

A. Genotype

B. Evolution

C. Phenotype

D. Adaptation

Phenotype is the observable expression of inherited traits—the features you can see or measure, such as height or eye color, that come from the genetic material passed down from parents and are shaped by the environment. The genetic code (genotype) is what gets transmitted to offspring, but what actually manifests as a trait in the next generation is the phenotype—the visible form of those inherited characteristics. Environment can influence how those traits appear without changing the underlying genes, which explains why phenotype is the term linked to inherited characteristics that can be seen in offspring. The other terms refer to different ideas: genotype is the genetic blueprint, evolution is how allele frequencies shift in populations over time, and adaptation is a trait that helps survival in a particular environment.

8. Humanistic counselling is best described as

A. Client-centered

B. Therapist-led and directive

C. Diagnosis-focused

D. Behavioral conditioning model

Humanistic counselling centers on the client as the driver of therapy, using a non-directive, client-centered approach. The therapist creates a safe, accepting environment through empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness (congruence), which helps the client explore feelings and grow toward self-actualization. This emphasis on the client's experience and self-directed growth is what makes it client-centered. The other descriptions don't fit: therapy isn't therapist-led or directive, it isn't focused on diagnosing, and it isn't based on behavioral conditioning.

9. Which techniques are used in psychodynamic therapy?

A. Free association and dream analysis

B. Desensitization and flooding

C. Observational learning and modeling

D. Cognitive restructuring and behavioral rehearsal

Psychodynamic therapy centers on uncovering unconscious processes and conflicts shaped by early experiences. A classic pair of techniques to access those hidden thoughts are free association and dream analysis. In free association, the patient says whatever comes to mind, which can reveal repressed impulses and unresolved issues. Dream analysis looks at dreams as expressions of unconscious wishes, with the therapist helping interpret latent content behind the manifest dream to uncover underlying conflicts. This approach aims to bring unconscious material into awareness to resolve internal tensions rooted in the past. Desensitization and flooding are exposure-based techniques used to reduce fear responses, not to explore unconscious content. Observational learning and modeling involve learning by watching others, a feature of social learning theory. Cognitive restructuring and behavioral rehearsal are core strategies of cognitive-behavioral therapy, focusing on thoughts and behaviors rather than unconscious material.

10. Which evolutionary mechanism explains the peacock's tail despite predation risk?

    A. Gene flow

    B. Genetic drift

    C. Sexual selection

    D. Stabilizing selection

Sexual selection explains why peacocks have such elaborate tails even though they increase predation risk. The bright, extravagant tail evolves because females prefer mates with bigger and more impressive displays, giving those males more offspring. Even though the tail adds danger and cost to survival, the reproductive advantage outweighs the survival cost, so the trait is maintained and exaggerated over generations. Other mechanisms don't fit: gene flow concerns movement of genes between populations and doesn't drive this display; genetic drift would cause random changes with no consistent preference for elaborate tails; stabilizing selection would push toward average tail traits rather than highly ornate ones.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

https://aqaapproachesinpsych.examzify.com

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!