

AQA Approaches in Psychology Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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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

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- 1. In evolutionary explanations, which concept explains why a trait like the peacock's tail increases mating success despite survival costs?**
 - A. Kin selection**
 - B. Sexual selection**
 - C. Inclusive fitness**
 - D. Natural selection**

- 2. What are the processing stages described by the computer (informational) processing model?**
 - A. Input, process, output**
 - B. Stimulus, response, reinforcement**
 - C. Encoding, storage, retrieval**
 - D. Perception, thinking, acting**

- 3. 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.**

- 4. What is a strength of the social learning theory evaluation?**
 - A. It explains cultural variations in behaviour**
 - B. It overlooks biological factors**
 - C. It has no practical applications**
 - D. It is based on a single unrepresentative study**

- 5. In cognitive theory, the sequence leading to a response begins with:**
 - A. Stimulus alone**
 - B. Stimulus and rumination**
 - C. Response then stimulus**
 - D. Random chance**

- 6. In twin studies, concordance refers to:**
- A. The probability that both twins have the trait**
 - B. The difference in traits between twins**
 - C. The rate at which traits develop in twins**
 - D. The amount of shared environment**
- 7. The genotype refers to:**
- A. Observable physical and psychological traits**
 - B. Unique set of genes that code development**
 - C. Environmental influences on traits**
 - D. End result of interactions between genes and the environment**
- 8. Which defense mechanism involves refusing to accept reality?**
- A. Denial**
 - B. Rationalization**
 - C. Reaction formation**
 - D. Displacement**
- 9. The Phallic stage is associated with which complexes?**
- A. Oedipus or Electra complex**
 - B. Anal retentive or expulsive**
 - C. Latent confusions**
 - D. Genital orientation**
- 10. In Freud's Little Hans case, what did the horse symbolize?**
- A. The father**
 - B. The mother**
 - C. Hans's fear**
 - D. The bus driver**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. In evolutionary explanations, which concept explains why a trait like the peacock's tail increases mating success despite survival costs?

- A. Kin selection**
- B. Sexual selection**
- C. Inclusive fitness**
- D. Natural selection**

Sexual selection explains this. It happens when traits evolve because they boost mating success, even if they reduce survival. The peacock's tail acts as a display that attracts females or signals genetic quality, leading to more matings and offspring. Over generations, those trait advantages in reproduction outweigh the survival costs, so the trait persists. This is different from natural selection, which emphasizes survival advantages; here the reproductive payoff drives the evolution of the trait. Kin selection and inclusive fitness involve benefiting relatives, not mate attraction, so they don't explain the peacock's tail in this context.

2. What are the processing stages described by the computer (informational) processing model?

- A. Input, process, output**
- B. Stimulus, response, reinforcement**
- C. Encoding, storage, retrieval**
- D. Perception, thinking, acting**

The computer (informational) processing model describes mental activity as a flow through three stages: input, processing, and output. Information from the environment is first taken in via our senses (input). It then undergoes mental operations—like perception, attention, encoding, interpretation, and decision-making (processing). Finally, a response is produced as a behavior or verbal/action output (output). This framing helps explain how we move from sensing something to deciding how to respond, and where bottlenecks or errors can occur, such as difficulties in encoding or slow processing. The other options fit different ideas: stimulus, response, reinforcement is about learning from consequences; encoding, storage, retrieval are stages of memory; perception, thinking, acting is a broad sequence that doesn't specifically map onto the input-processing-output architecture of the computer model.

3. 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.

4. What is a strength of the social learning theory evaluation?

- A. It explains cultural variations in behaviour**
- B. It overlooks biological factors
- C. It has no practical applications
- D. It is based on a single unrepresentative study

A strength of social learning theory is its ability to explain cultural variations in behaviour. Learning is seen as arising from observing models and the reinforcement patterns present in a person's social environment. Different cultures have different models to imitate and different rewards or sanctions for certain behaviours, so the behaviours that people learn can vary across cultures. This helps account for why actions and norms aren't identical everywhere, by tying them to the social context in which learning occurs. The other statements describe limitations or inaccuracies—biological factors aren't the primary focus of SLT, there are clear practical applications in education and media, and the theory rests on a body of research rather than a single unrepresentative study.

5. In cognitive theory, the sequence leading to a response begins with:

- A. Stimulus alone
- B. Stimulus and rumination**
- C. Response then stimulus
- D. Random chance

In cognitive theory, how we respond isn't automatic after a stimulus; the mind processes and interprets what's happened before any action. This internal processing is captured by rumination—the thinking and evaluating that happens after a stimulus but before a response. So the sequence starts with the stimulus and the organism's cognitive processing, which then leads to the chosen response. Stimulus alone skips that mental step, which cognitive theory says is essential. A sequence of response followed by stimulus reverses the order of events, which doesn't describe how thinking guides action. Random chance ignores the cognitive processing that mediates how we respond.

6. In twin studies, concordance refers to:

- A. The probability that both twins have the trait**
- B. The difference in traits between twins**
- C. The rate at which traits develop in twins**
- D. The amount of shared environment**

Concordance in twin studies refers to the extent to which both members of a twin pair express the same trait. It captures the co-occurrence of the trait within pairs, essentially the probability that both twins have the trait. When concordance is high, especially in identical twins who share more genetic material, it suggests a stronger genetic contribution to that trait. It is not about how different the twins are, how quickly a trait develops, or the amount of shared environment alone. So the best description is the probability that both twins have the trait.

7. The genotype refers to:

- A. Observable physical and psychological traits**
- B. Unique set of genes that code development**
- C. Environmental influences on traits**
- D. End result of interactions between genes and the environment**

Genotype is the genetic makeup you inherit—the unique set of genes that codes for development and potential traits. This is why it's the best fit: it refers to the inherited genetic blueprint, not what you can observe or how traits turn out. Observable characteristics (phenotype) come from genes plus environmental influences, so environmental factors and gene-environment interactions affect expression, not the underlying genotype.

8. Which defense mechanism involves refusing to accept reality?

- A. Denial**
- B. Rationalization**
- C. Reaction formation**
- D. Displacement**

Refusing to accept reality is a defense mechanism that shields a person from distress by keeping upsetting facts out of conscious awareness. Denial helps reduce anxiety in the moment by blocking acceptance of painful information, so someone might insist a serious diagnosis isn't real or that a troubling event will just go away. This differs from rationalization, which adds plausible-sounding excuses to justify the situation; reaction formation, which shows the opposite of what is really felt; and displacement, which shifts emotions onto a safer target. So, denial is the mechanism that directly involves not accepting reality.

9. The Phallic stage is associated with which complexes?

- A. Oedipus or Electra complex**
- B. Anal retentive or expulsive**
- C. Latent confusions**
- D. Genital orientation**

In the Phallic stage, children become aware of their genitals and start to experience unconscious sexual feelings toward the opposite-sex parent while rivaling the same-sex parent. The specific conflicts are the Oedipus complex in boys, where a boy desires his mother and fears his father, and the Electra complex in girls, where a girl desires her father and resents her mother. Both are resolved through identification with the same-sex parent, which helps form the child's gender identity and the superego. That's why these two complexes are the associations of this stage. The other options relate to different stages or broad concepts not tied to the phallic conflicts.

10. In Freud's Little Hans case, what did the horse symbolize?

- A. The father**
- B. The mother**
- C. Hans's fear**
- D. The bus driver**

In this Freudian reading, a child's phobia is seen as expressing unconscious family dynamics. The horse in Hans's fear is interpreted as a stand-in for the father—an embodiment of paternal authority and potential punishment. This symbolic link fits Freud's idea of the Oedipus complex, where the child feels rivalry with the father and a desire for the mother, with fear of the father reflecting castration anxiety. So the horse is best understood as symbolizing the father, rather than the mother or other figures like a bus driver, and the fear itself is a manifestation of that underlying conflict.

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!

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