

COMPREHENSIVE PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY – SPEECH SOUNDS, ARTICULATORY FEATURES, AND DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES PRACTICE TEST (SAMPLE)

STUDY GUIDE



SAMPLE STUDY GUIDE WITH LIMITED QUESTIONS

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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. Which of the following illustrates a protoword?**
- A. "mama" used to mean mother
 - B. "dog" used as a conventional word
 - C. "dada" used to mean father
 - D. "wawa" used consistently to mean water
- 2. Percentile ranks in standardized articulation tests indicate how a score relates to the normative sample. Which option best captures this concept?**
- A. They indicate how a score compares to the normative sample
 - B. They indicate how many standard deviations above the mean
 - C. They describe the passing threshold
 - D. They indicate the raw score
- 3. What is vowel reduction?**
- A. Unstressed vowels reduce to a mid-central or schwa-like vowel (e.g., / ə /)
 - B. Vowels become longer in stressed syllables
 - C. Vowels change to diphthongs in unstressed syllables
 - D. Vowels become nasalized in connected speech
- 4. What does a positive Voice Onset Time (VOT) indicate for a stop consonant?**
- A. Voicing begins before release
 - B. Voicing begins after release
 - C. Voicing begins at the same time as release
 - D. Voicing is not involved
- 5. What does word-final position describe?**
- A. The middle of a word
 - B. The beginning of a word
 - C. The end of a syllable
 - D. The end of a word

6. Sander (1972) summarized normative data from many studies and identified the age at which 90% of all children produced each consonant correctly more often than not. This age for the group is referred to as the...
- A. Age of mastery
 - B. Median age of acquisition
 - C. Age of customary production
 - D. Normal limit of acquisition
7. Which IPA symbol represents the voiceless alveolar fricative?
- A. /z/
 - B. /h/
 - C. / /
 - D. /s/
8. During the free speech sample the child says "It jumped on the blocks." Which of the following is a true statement about the number of linguistic units contained in this utterance?
- A. Nineteen phonemes
 - B. Two complex onsets
 - C. Seven morphemes
 - D. No rimes
9. How many phonemes are in the phrase "chapter five"?
- A. 11
 - B. 10
 - C. 9
 - D. 8
10. Which word in the sample demonstrates final-position substitution, such as replacing a final velar with an alveolar?
- A. tree
 - B. coat
 - C. duck
 - D. can

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Which of the following illustrates a protoword?

- A. "mama" used to mean mother
- B. "dog" used as a conventional word
- C. "dada" used to mean father
- D. "wawa" used consistently to mean water**

A protoword is a child-made, consistent sound that the child uses to refer to a specific referent, but it isn't an established word in the language. It's idiosyncratic to the child and can't be reliably understood by others as a standard term. In this example, the child uses "wawa" consistently to mean water. That fits the idea of a protoword: a stable, referent-specific form that isn't the conventional word for water in the language, illustrating how children map meaning with invented forms before they acquire real words. By contrast, terms like "mama" or "dada" that function as mother or father are typical early true words or shared infant vocabulary, and "dog" used as a conventional word is a standard lexical item in the language, not an idiosyncratic child form.

2. Percentile ranks in standardized articulation tests indicate how a score relates to the normative sample. Which option best captures this concept?

- A. They indicate how a score compares to the normative sample**
- B. They indicate how many standard deviations above the mean
- C. They describe the passing threshold
- D. They indicate the raw score

Percentile ranks show where a score sits in relation to the normative sample. They indicate how a score compares to peers in the normative group—specifically, the percentage of individuals in the normative sample who scored at or below that score. For example, a percentile of 60 means the score is higher than about 60% of peers and lower than about 40%. This is different from a measure of distance from the mean (how many standard deviations above the mean), which would be a z-score; it's also not a passing threshold or the raw number of correct items. In short, percentile ranks capture relative standing within the normative distribution.

3. What is vowel reduction?

- A. Unstressed vowels reduce to a mid-central or schwa-like vowel (e.g., /ə/)**
- B. Vowels become longer in stressed syllables
- C. Vowels change to diphthongs in unstressed syllables
- D. Vowels become nasalized in connected speech

Vowel reduction is when vowels in unstressed syllables lose their full, distinct quality and become a neutral, mid-central sound, most often realized as schwa /ə/. This happens to ease articulation in rapid or casual speech, so the syllable isn't given the same acoustic prominence as a stressed one. In English, an everyday example is the first vowel in about, which is pronounced as /ə/ rather than a full vowel, and similarly in many unstressed syllables in words like banana, where the vowels tend to reduce to a schwa. The emphasis stays on the stressed parts of the word, while the others are shortened and centralized. So it's not about vowels getting longer in stressed syllables, which would increase emphasis rather than reduce it. It's also not about vowels turning into diphthongs in unstressed positions, which would change their quality in a different way, nor is it about nasalization from surrounding sounds in connected speech. The defining idea is this shift toward a neutral, mid-central vowel in unstressed contexts.

4. What does a positive Voice Onset Time (VOT) indicate for a stop consonant?

- A. Voicing begins before release
- B. Voicing begins after release**
- C. Voicing begins at the same time as release
- D. Voicing is not involved

Voice Onset Time measures the interval from when a stop release happens to when the vocal folds start vibrating. A positive VOT means the voicing begins after the release—the order is release first, then vocal fold vibration. This pattern shows the stop is produced without voicing during the closure and a short lag before voicing starts, which is typical for voiceless stops. In contrast, if voicing started before or at release (negative or near-zero VOT), that would be characteristic of a voiced stop. For example, English voiceless stops like the initial *p* often have a noticeable lag before voicing begins, producing a positive VOT, whereas voiced stops like *b* typically begin voicing earlier, yielding a smaller or negative VOT.

5. What does word-final position describe?

- A. The middle of a word
- B. The beginning of a word
- C. The end of a syllable
- D. The end of a word**

Word-final position describes where a sound sits relative to the end of the word—the final segment you pronounce before the word boundary. In any word you can have initial, medial, and final positions; the final position is simply the last sound of the word. For example, in “cat” the final sound is /t/; in “happiness” the final sound is /s/; in “computer” the final sound is typically the rhotacized vowel / / in many dialects. This is about the end of the whole word, not the end of a syllable, which can occur earlier within multisyllabic words.

6. Sander (1972) summarized normative data from many studies and identified the age at which 90% of all children produced each consonant correctly more often than not. This age for the group is referred to as the...

- A. Age of mastery**
- B. Median age of acquisition
- C. Age of customary production
- D. Normal limit of acquisition

In phonetic development, the term used for the age by which about 90% of children produce a consonant correctly is the age of mastery. Sander's work pooled data from many studies to identify the point at which a sound has become reliably produced by the vast majority of children, not just a few. That 90% criterion signals a stable, typical achievement across the group, marking when the sound can be considered mastered for practical purposes in development. This differs from the median age of acquisition, which would indicate the age by which half of children have acquired the sound, a different threshold and not the same level of reliability. The other labels aren't standard terms used to describe this 90% mastery criterion, so age of mastery best captures the concept described by Sander's normative data.

7. Which IPA symbol represents the voiceless alveolar fricative?

- A. /z/
- B. /h/
- C. / /
- D. /s/

The sound in question is produced with air flowing through a narrow constriction at the alveolar ridge, with no vibration of the vocal cords. That combination—alveolar place of articulation, fricative manner, and voiceless voicing—is exactly what the symbol /s/ represents, as heard in the initial sound of “see” or “sun.” Why this one fits best: /s/ matches both the place (alveolar) and the manner (fricative) and the voiceless setting, giving the clear, hiss-like edge you hear in words like “see.” The other options don’t share this exact combination. /z/ is the voiced counterpart of the fricative at the same place, so it involves vocal fold vibration. /h/ is a fricative too, but it’s produced at the glottis, not at the alveolar ridge. / / is a fricative too, but its place of articulation is postalveolar (behind the alveolar ridge), as in “ship,” not alveolar.

8. During the free speech sample the child says “It jumped on the blocks.” Which of the following is a true statement about the number of linguistic units contained in this utterance?

- A. Nineteen phonemes
- B. Two complex onsets
- C. Seven morphemes
- D. No rimes

Morphemes are the smallest units of meaning or grammatical function in a language. In the sentence “It jumped on the blocks,” there are seven such units. It is a single morpheme (a pronoun). Jumped is two morphemes: jump plus the past-tense marker -ed. On is one morpheme. The is one morpheme. Blocks is two morphemes: block plus the plural marker -s. When you add them up, you get seven morphemes in total. If you counted sounds rather than meaning-bearing units, you’d get a higher number of phonemes, which is why seven morphemes is the correct count for this question.

9. How many phonemes are in the phrase “chapter five”?

- A. 11
- B. 10
- C. 9
- D. 8

Counting phonemes means tallying each distinct sound you actually hear when you say the phrase. For chapter, the typical pronunciation is /tæp.t/. The initial “ch” is one sound /t/, then /æ/, then /p/, then /t/, and the ending / / is a single rhotacized vowel sound. That gives five phonemes for this word. For five, the pronunciation is /fa v/. Here you have /f/, the diphthong /a / treated as one vowel phoneme, and /v/, totaling three phonemes. Add them together and you get eight phonemes in the whole phrase.

10. Which word in the sample demonstrates final-position substitution, such as replacing a final velar with an alveolar?

A. tree

B. coat

C. duck

D. can

Final-position substitution is when the last consonant in a word is replaced by a different consonant, often replacing a velar at the end with an alveolar. The word duck ends with a velar stop /k/. In many children's speech, final velars tend to be replaced by alveolars like /t/ or /d/, so duck can be pronounced as something like /d t/ (sound-wise, "duct"). That shows the pattern clearly: a velar at the end being substituted by an alveolar. The other words don't illustrate this because they either end with a non-velar sound (tree ends in a vowel, coat ends with an alveolar /t/, can ends with an alveolar /n/), so there isn't a final velar that could be substituted.

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://compphoneticsphonology.examzify.com>

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

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