

DSST CRIMINAL JUSTICE PRACTICE EXAM (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. What is the branch of public law that deals with the powers and duties of government agencies? - Implements public policies such as public health, environmental protection and workplace safety**
 - A. Constitutional law
 - B. Administrative law
 - C. Criminal law
 - D. Civil law
- 2. Capital punishment is reserved for which types of crimes?**
 - A. Petty theft
 - B. Traffic violations
 - C. Heinous crimes such as murder and treason
 - D. Drug possession
- 3. Which 1966 court case required suspects to be informed of their rights to satisfy the 5th Amendment's protection against self-incrimination?**
 - A. Miranda v. Arizona
 - B. Plessy v. Ferguson
 - C. Weeks v. United States
 - D. Dickerson v. United States
- 4. Stare decisis is the guiding principle of case law because it relies on what?**
 - A. The use of statutory codes in decisions.
 - B. Precedents established by prior cases.
 - C. Random chance.
 - D. Judicial activism.
- 5. Which branch of law is primarily concerned with defining offenses and punishing offenders?**
 - A. Statutory law
 - B. Administrative law
 - C. Criminal law
 - D. Constitutional law

- 6. Which statement about peremptory challenges is true?**
- A. They are unlimited and available to both sides
 - B. They require a stated reason for removal
 - C. They can only be used to remove biased jurors
 - D. They are limited in number and available to both prosecutors and defense
- 7. Which 1976 court case established capital punishment in a manner not violating the Eighth Amendment's cruel and unusual punishment prohibition?**
- A. Gregg v Georgia
 - B. Furman v Georgia
 - C. Kennedy v Florida
 - D. Atkins v Virginia
- 8. Which state has the second-most offenders on death row?**
- A. New York
 - B. Florida
 - C. Arizona
 - D. Texas
- 9. Which agency conducts the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)?**
- A. Bureau of Justice Statistics
 - B. Federal Bureau of Investigation
 - C. National Security Agency
 - D. Census Bureau
- 10. Which defense arises when a defendant's conduct is based on an incorrect belief about a fact?**
- A. Mistake of Fact
 - B. Duress
 - C. Insanity
 - D. Entrapment

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is the branch of public law that deals with the powers and duties of government agencies? - Implements public policies such as public health, environmental protection and workplace safety

- A. Constitutional law
- B. Administrative law**
- C. Criminal law
- D. Civil law

Administrative law governs how government agencies exercise their powers to implement and enforce public policy. It covers how agencies get authority, create rules, enforce regulations, and adjudicate disputes, which is exactly how policies in public health, environmental protection, and workplace safety are put into practice. This area ensures agencies operate within their legal boundaries and follow proper procedures when issuing rules and taking actions that affect the public. Constitutional law, by contrast, deals with the powers and structure of the government itself and fundamental rights; criminal law focuses on offenses against the state and punishment; civil law covers private rights and disputes between individuals or organizations.

2. Capital punishment is reserved for which types of crimes?

- A. Petty theft
- B. Traffic violations
- C. Heinous crimes such as murder and treason**
- D. Drug possession

Capital punishment is reserved for the most serious offenses where the harm to victims and society is greatest and the punishment is considered proportionate to the crime. That's why the category described as heinous crimes such as murder and treason fits best. These offenses involve taking a life or directly threatening the state's security, reflecting the gravity that death penalties are designed to address. In contrast, petty theft, traffic violations, and drug possession typically involve lesser harm or offenses that do not meet the threshold for capital punishment, so they are not treated as eligible for the death penalty.

3. Which 1966 court case required suspects to be informed of their rights to satisfy the 5th Amendment's protection against self-incrimination?

- A. Miranda v. Arizona**
- B. Plessy v. Ferguson
- C. Weeks v. United States
- D. Dickerson v. United States

Protecting the Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination during police questioning is the focus here. In the 1966 ruling, the Supreme Court held that suspects must be informed of their rights before custodial interrogation. Those rights—usually called the Miranda rights—include the right to remain silent and the right to an attorney, with appointed counsel if you can't afford one. The idea is to prevent coercive questioning and ensure any statements or confessions are voluntary and informed. If these warnings aren't given and a valid waiver isn't obtained, the resulting statements are typically barred from use in court. While later cases reaffirmed the Miranda framework, this decision first established the requirement to notify suspects of their rights to satisfy the Fifth Amendment's protection against self-incrimination. Other listed cases deal with different issues (one about racial segregation, another about the exclusionary rule, and another confirming Miranda rather than creating it).

4. Stare decisis is the guiding principle of case law because it relies on what?

- A. The use of statutory codes in decisions.
- B. Precedents established by prior cases.**
- C. Random chance.
- D. Judicial activism.

Stare decisis relies on precedent established by prior cases to guide decisions. Judges look to earlier rulings with similar facts to determine how to rule now, treating those earlier decisions as binding or highly persuasive. This creates consistency across rulings, helps courts work efficiently, and gives people and institutions a reliable expectation of how laws will be interpreted. It also helps ensure that like cases are treated alike within the same jurisdiction, providing stability in the legal system. The other ideas don't fit the mechanism of stare decisis: relying on statutory codes would mean decisions are driven primarily by statutes themselves rather than by past judicial decisions; random chance would produce unpredictable outcomes; and judicial activism refers to judges altering or overturning established precedent or pushing policy, which is the opposite of following prior decisions.

5. Which branch of law is primarily concerned with defining offenses and punishing offenders?

- A. Statutory law
- B. Administrative law
- C. Criminal law**
- D. Constitutional law

Criminal law focuses on defining offenses and punishing offenders. It specifies which conduct is illegal, the penalties that apply, and the procedures for charging, trying, and punishing those who break the law. This is distinct from statutory law (the written statutes created by lawmakers), administrative law (rules and decisions of government agencies), and constitutional law (interpretation of the Constitution). In short, criminal law provides the framework for what counts as a crime and how offenders are punished.

6. Which statement about peremptory challenges is true?

- A. They are unlimited and available to both sides
- B. They require a stated reason for removal
- C. They can only be used to remove biased jurors
- D. They are limited in number and available to both prosecutors and defense**

Peremptory challenges let attorneys strike potential jurors without giving a reason during jury selection. This tool is not unlimited; there is a capped number of peremptory challenges, and both sides—the prosecution and the defense—have access to them. That combination—a limited allotment shared by both sides—explains why this statement is true. It's useful to contrast with challenges for cause, which require a stated reason to remove a juror who cannot be impartial. Peremptories don't require a reason, but they are bounded by the number allowed and must be used within the rules that prohibit discriminatory excluding of jurors based on protected characteristics.

7. Which 1976 court case established capital punishment in a manner not violating the Eighth Amendment's cruel and unusual punishment prohibition?

- A. Gregg v Georgia
- B. Furman v Georgia**
- C. Kennedy v Florida
- D. Atkins v Virginia

Capital punishment can be constitutional if the legal process includes safeguards that prevent arbitrary results. In Furman v. Georgia (1972), the Court struck down death-penalty statutes because their application was arbitrary and thus violated the Eighth Amendment. In Gregg v. Georgia (1976), the Court held that the death penalty itself is not inherently unconstitutional, provided states implement procedures that limit arbitrariness, such as bifurcated trials, weighing aggravating and mitigating factors, and automatic appellate review. This established that capital punishment could be carried out in a way consistent with the Eighth Amendment. The other cases address different issues: Kennedy v. Florida prohibits the death penalty for juveniles at the time of the crime; Atkins v. Virginia prohibits execution of intellectually disabled individuals.

8. Which state has the second-most offenders on death row?

- A. New York
- B. Florida**
- C. Arizona
- D. Texas

Death row counts vary by state, and this question relies on knowing which states keep an active death row population and in what order they stand. Texas has the largest number of inmates on death row. Among the options listed, Florida has the next-largest population, making it the second-most. New York currently has no inmates on death row because the death penalty is not in use there, so it cannot be second. Arizona does have death-row inmates, but its count is smaller than Florida's, so it does not rank second.

9. Which agency conducts the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)?

- A. Bureau of Justice Statistics**
- B. Federal Bureau of Investigation
- C. National Security Agency
- D. Census Bureau

The National Crime Victimization Survey is conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the statistical arm of the U.S. Department of Justice. This agency designs and manages national surveys that measure crimes experienced by people and households, including incidents that never come to the attention of police. That focus on victimization data is what sets the NCVS apart. The FBI handles crime data primarily from police reports for the Uniform Crime Reports, not victimization surveys. The Census Bureau runs large demographic and economic surveys, but the NCVS is administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The National Security Agency operates in a completely different realm of national security and has no role in collecting crime victimization data.

10. Which defense arises when a defendant's conduct is based on an incorrect belief about a fact?

A. Mistake of Fact

B. Duress

C. Insanity

D. Entrapment

Mistake of fact focuses on the mind state tied to what actually happened. If a defendant truly believes a fact to be true, that belief can mean they lacked the required mental state for the crime. When the offense depends on knowing or intending something about a fact, an honest mistaken belief can negate that element, so the person may not be guilty. For example, taking property thinking it's theirs means there may be no intent to steal because the key fact—the ownership of the property—was mistaken. The other defenses involve coercion (duress), mental illness (insanity), or being induced by law enforcement (entrapment), which don't hinge on a mistaken belief about a fact.

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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://dsstcrimjustice.examzify.com>

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

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