

MCAT Psychology and Sociology 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. Treatment stemming from institutional culture or policies rather than individual action is an example of what?**
 - A. Institutional Discrimination**
 - B. Latent Learning**
 - C. External Locus of Control**
 - D. Cultural Relativism**

- 2. Which term refers to stressors that are background, persistent aspects of daily life like pollution, noise, or traffic?**
 - A. Major Life Event Stressor**
 - B. Ambient Stressor**
 - C. Catastrophic Stressor**
 - D. Acute Stressor**

- 3. Altering goals and values is a hallmark of which coping approach?**
 - A. Problem-focused coping**
 - B. Emotion-focused coping**
 - C. Avoidance coping**
 - D. Appraisal-focused coping**

- 4. According to cognitive dissonance theory, which change are individuals more likely to make to reduce internal inconsistency?**
 - A. Change attitudes to align with behavior.**
 - B. Change behavior to align with attitudes.**
 - C. Seek new information to increase dissonance.**
 - D. End relationships to reduce conflict.**

- 5. In split-brain patients, which statement is true about hemispheric access?**
 - A. The left hemisphere has no access to the right hemisphere**
 - B. The right hemisphere has no access to the left hemisphere**
 - C. Language is localized to the right hemisphere**
 - D. Cross-hemisphere communication is normal via the corpus callosum**

- 6. What concept describes understanding the place of oneself and others within a social activity from the perspective of all participants?**
- A. I**
 - B. Me**
 - C. Generalized Other**
 - D. Self**
- 7. Which term refers to a status that is given, rather than earned?**
- A. Master status**
 - B. Social status**
 - C. Ascribed status**
 - D. Achieved status**
- 8. Stereotypes are**
- A. They are always accurate beliefs about groups**
 - B. They are positive or negative but not justified**
 - C. They are memories of past events**
 - D. They are oversimplified beliefs about groups that can be positive or negative**
- 9. Which statement best describes self-serving bias?**
- A. Positive behaviors attributed to internal, stable factors; negative behaviors to external factors.**
 - B. Positive behaviors attributed to external factors; negative behaviors to internal factors.**
 - C. All behavior is attributed to random chance.**
 - D. All behaviors are attributed to intentional control.**
- 10. What is the term for the system that stores and manipulates information over short periods, including subsystems for visual and verbal data and a central executive?**
- A. Long-Term Memory**
 - B. Working Memory**
 - C. Sensory Memory**
 - D. Procedural Memory**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Treatment stemming from institutional culture or policies rather than individual action is an example of what?

- A. Institutional Discrimination**
- B. Latent Learning**
- C. External Locus of Control**
- D. Cultural Relativism**

Treatment that stems from institutional culture or policies reflects discrimination built into the structures of organizations. When policies, procedures, and norms within schools, workplaces, or systems produce unequal treatment for certain groups—regardless of any individual’s intentions—the bias is systemic, not simply about one person’s actions. This is the essence of institutional discrimination: the effect of supposedly neutral rules that still disadvantage some groups. Latent learning isn’t about biased systems; it’s about acquiring knowledge without immediate reinforcement. An external locus of control relates to whether someone feels outcomes are controlled by themselves or by outside forces, not to patterns of discrimination embedded in institutions. Cultural relativism is about evaluating cultures on their own terms, not about biased practices within organizations. So the described scenario best fits institutional discrimination.

2. Which term refers to stressors that are background, persistent aspects of daily life like pollution, noise, or traffic?

- A. Major Life Event Stressor**
- B. Ambient Stressor**
- C. Catastrophic Stressor**
- D. Acute Stressor**

Ambient stressors are the ongoing, background elements of the environment that linger in daily life, such as pollution, noise, and traffic. These persistent factors keep a low to moderate level of stress over time and can add up to affect overall well-being (allostatic load) even though they aren’t dramatic, one-time events. That’s what makes them the best fit for stressors described as background and persistent in everyday life. Major life event stressors refer to significant, discrete changes like marriage, divorce, or losing a job. Catastrophic stressors are extreme, large-scale events such as natural disasters. Acute stressors are sudden, intense events that are short in duration. The described background, ongoing nature of pollution, noise, and traffic aligns with ambient stressors rather than those other categories.

3. Altering goals and values is a hallmark of which coping approach?

- A. Problem-focused coping**
- B. Emotion-focused coping**
- C. Avoidance coping**
- D. Appraisal-focused coping**

Altering goals and values reflects changing how we interpret or appraise a stressful situation. This is appraisal-focused coping, which centers on cognitive reframing to reduce the stressor's perceived impact. By re-evaluating what's important, adjusting priorities, or shifting the meaning we attach to the event, we lessen its threat without necessarily changing the situation itself or our immediate emotional response. This differs from trying to solve the problem directly (problem-focused coping) or trying to regulate emotions without changing the appraisal (emotion-focused coping). It also isn't about avoiding the stressor.

4. According to cognitive dissonance theory, which change are individuals more likely to make to reduce internal inconsistency?

- A. Change attitudes to align with behavior.**
- B. Change behavior to align with attitudes.**
- C. Seek new information to increase dissonance.**
- D. End relationships to reduce conflict.**

When we experience cognitive dissonance, there's a mismatch between what we believe and what we do, which creates discomfort. People try to reduce that discomfort by changing the thought that's most flexible. It's usually easier to adjust our attitudes to align with a behavior we've already carried out than to change the behavior itself, which can be costly or difficult. For instance, if someone cheats on a test but values honesty, they might shift their belief to downplay honesty or justify the cheating, thus altering their attitude to fit the action. Changing behavior to match an attitude can happen, but changing beliefs to justify or align with past actions is the more common, efficient route to restore internal consistency.

5. In split-brain patients, which statement is true about hemispheric access?
- A. The left hemisphere has no access to the right hemisphere
 - B. The right hemisphere has no access to the left hemisphere**
 - C. Language is localized to the right hemisphere
 - D. Cross-hemisphere communication is normal via the corpus callosum

Split-brain brains reveal what happens when the main bridge between the two halves of the brain is cut. The corpus callosum normally lets information travel between hemispheres, so each side can share what it's processed. When it's severed, each hemisphere largely operates in isolation. Language is typically housed in the left hemisphere. That means information processed there can be reported verbally, especially when it's received from the right visual field. But information processed on the right side can't be conveyed to the language centers because the pathway between hemispheres is disrupted. So the right hemisphere ends up with no access to the left hemisphere's information, which is why cross-hemisphere communication isn't normal in split-brain patients. To see this in action, imagine something seen in the left visual field (processed by the right hemisphere): the person might be able to draw or select it with the left hand, but often cannot name or describe it aloud because that information can't reach the language-dominant left hemisphere.

6. What concept describes understanding the place of oneself and others within a social activity from the perspective of all participants?
- A. I
 - B. Me
 - C. Generalized Other**
 - D. Self

Generalized Other is the idea that we understand our place and the place of others in a social activity by considering the perspectives and expectations of the broader group. It's not just how one person would react, but how the norms of the community or social context as a whole would shape behavior. This internalized sense of shared standards lets you anticipate how multiple participants might view your actions and adjust accordingly, so you act in a way that fits the collective expectations. For example, in a classroom discussion, you weigh what the group's norms, the instructor's goals, and the typical responses of classmates would be, not just what one individual would think. This differs from the impulsive, spontaneous self (I) and the self as seen through others' eyes (Me); the generalized other encompasses the broader social framework that guides behavior across many people.

7. Which term refers to a status that is given, rather than earned?

- A. Master status
- B. Social status
- C. Ascribed status**
- D. Achieved status

Ascribed status refers to a position in society that is assigned at birth or involuntarily later in life. It is given, not earned, with examples such as race, ethnicity, gender, or family lineage. This contrasts with achieved status, which is earned through actions, choices, or accomplishments. A master status is the dominant identity that can arise from either ascribed or achieved factors, but the term that specifically means a status that is given rather than earned is ascribed status.

8. Stereotypes are

- A. They are always accurate beliefs about groups
- B. They are positive or negative but not justified
- C. They are memories of past events
- D. They are oversimplified beliefs about groups that can be positive or negative**

Stereotypes are oversimplified beliefs about groups that can be positive or negative. They act as quick mental shortcuts, generalizing attributes to many individuals within a group and helping us categorize social information rapidly. Because they lump people together, they ignore individual variation and are often not accurate, even if they feel true. They aren't memories of past events, and they aren't inherently about justification—stereotypes can be positive or negative and still be oversimplified. That combination of oversimplification with valence is what makes the described option the best fit.

9. Which statement best describes self-serving bias?

- A. Positive behaviors attributed to internal, stable factors; negative behaviors to external factors.**
- B. Positive behaviors attributed to external factors; negative behaviors to internal factors.
- C. All behavior is attributed to random chance.
- D. All behaviors are attributed to intentional control.

Self-serving bias is the tendency to protect self-esteem by explaining successes with internal, stable factors (your own abilities or effort) and failures with external, situational factors (luck, task difficulty, others' actions). The statement that positive outcomes are attributed to internal, stable causes and negative outcomes to external causes best captures this pattern, because it shows why people take credit for good results while blaming outside factors for bad ones. This helps maintain a sense of competence, though it can distort judgment by downplaying personal weaknesses or the role of luck. For example, acing a test is often credited to ability and hard work, while a poor grade is blamed on a tough exam or distracting circumstances rather than a lack of ability. This bias is different from theories about others' behavior (where attributions about others tend to be internal) and from viewing outcomes as random; it specifically applies to how we explain our own successes and failures.

10. What is the term for the system that stores and manipulates information over short periods, including subsystems for visual and verbal data and a central executive?

A. Long-Term Memory

B. Working Memory

C. Sensory Memory

D. Procedural Memory

Working memory is the system that holds and actively processes information over short periods. It isn't just a passive store; it manipulates information as you reason, solve problems, or hold a phone number long enough to use it. The model splits this processing into subsystems: a phonological loop handles verbal or auditory data, a visuospatial sketchpad handles visual and spatial information, and a central executive coordinates attention and controls the flow of information between these parts. An episodic buffer later helps integrate data from different sources and connect to long-term memory. This is distinct from long-term memory (long-lasting storage), sensory memory (brief sensory traces), and procedural memory (skills and actions). The description fits because it emphasizes short-term manipulation and the presence of separate systems for visual and verbal data plus a central coordinating component.

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://mcatpsychologysociology.examzify.com>

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

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