

MEDICAL COLLEGE ADMISSION TEST (MCAT) PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, AND BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF BEHAVIOR (PSYCH/SOC) PRACTICE EXAM (SAMPLE)

STUDY GUIDE



SAMPLE STUDY GUIDE WITH LIMITED QUESTIONS

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THE FULL VERSION STUDY GUIDE

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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 a common factor that cultural universals tend to pertain to?**
 - A. Financial systems
 - B. Political structures
 - C. Basic human survival
 - D. Religious beliefs
- 2. The just world phenomenon is the belief that:**
 - A. The universe operates in a completely random manner
 - B. Good individuals are rewarded and bad individuals are punished
 - C. Life is inherently unfair
 - D. People create their own fate regardless of actions
- 3. Which of the following statements about the divorce rate in America is true?**
 - A. It has declined due to increased religious support
 - B. It has increased due to more acceptance of diverse lifestyles
 - C. It only affects lower-income families
 - D. It has no significant correlation with women's autonomy
- 4. What age range corresponds to the Concrete Operational stage in Piaget's theory?**
 - A. 0-2 years
 - B. 2-7 years
 - C. 7-11 years
 - D. 11+ years
- 5. Which of the following is an example of a central trait?**
 - A. Perseverance
 - B. Shyness
 - C. Leadership
 - D. Greed

- 6. What neurotransmitter is considered the most common excitatory neurotransmitter in the central nervous system?**
- A. Dopamine.
 - B. Glutamate.
 - C. Norepinephrine.
 - D. Serotonin.
- 7. What is the main function of Wernicke's area?**
- A. Speech production
 - B. Speech comprehension
 - C. Language acquisition
 - D. Memory processing
- 8. In which personality disorder does an individual feel a constant sense of emptiness and fear of abandonment?**
- A. Narcissistic Personality Disorder
 - B. Borderline Personality Disorder
 - C. Histrionic Personality Disorder
 - D. Dependent Personality Disorder
- 9. In the context of the dramaturgical approach, what does 'front stage self' refer to?**
- A. Behavior in private settings
 - B. Behavior performed in front of an audience
 - C. Personal thoughts outside of social interactions
 - D. Behavior that is inauthentic
- 10. What aspect of memory is likely to decline more significantly with age?**
- A. Recognition memory
 - B. Immediate recall
 - C. Free recall
 - D. Procedural memory

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is a common factor that cultural universals tend to pertain to?

- A. Financial systems
- B. Political structures
- C. Basic human survival**
- D. Religious beliefs

Cultural universals are elements, patterns, traits, or institutions that are common to all human cultures. The correct answer, which pertains to basic human survival, highlights that many cultural universals arise from the shared needs and experiences of humanity. These include practices related to food acquisition, family structure, and kinship. The necessity of securing food, shelter, and protection from harm drives cultural developments that facilitate human survival, such as the establishment of social norms, family units, and communal living. Because these elements are fundamental to the human experience, they tend to emerge across various societies, making them universal in nature. While financial systems, political structures, and religious beliefs can vary widely and are influenced by cultural context, they do not serve as the foundational elements necessary for the basic survival of humans in the same way that practices related to food, shelter, and social support do. Thus, the focus on basic human survival as a common factor in cultural universals is well-founded, as it underscores the shared biological and social needs of people across diverse cultures.

2. The just world phenomenon is the belief that:

- A. The universe operates in a completely random manner
- B. Good individuals are rewarded and bad individuals are punished**
- C. Life is inherently unfair
- D. People create their own fate regardless of actions

The belief in the just world phenomenon posits that individuals have an intrinsic need to believe that the world is fair and just. This leads to the conclusion that good actions are rewarded while bad actions are punished. People adopt this belief as a way to rationalize the outcomes of their experiences and the experiences of others; they find comfort in the idea that the universe operates on principles of fairness and justice. This approach helps to provide meaning to life events, particularly in the context of misfortune or suffering, suggesting that individuals typically receive outcomes that are proportional to their actions. Thus, when someone encounters adversity, it may lead observers to attribute the misfortune to the individual's past choices or behaviors, reinforcing the belief that good deeds lead to positive outcomes and bad deeds lead to negative ones. This belief, however, can lead to the victim-blaming mindset, in which those who are suffering are seen as having deserved their plight due to their actions, despite the fact that many factors influencing life circumstances are beyond individual control. Therefore, understanding this phenomenon is vital in the fields of psychology and social behavior, as it informs how people perceive justice, fairness, and moral outcomes in society.

3. Which of the following statements about the divorce rate in America is true?

- A. It has declined due to increased religious support
- B. It has increased due to more acceptance of diverse lifestyles**
- C. It only affects lower-income families
- D. It has no significant correlation with women's autonomy

The statement that the divorce rate in America has increased due to more acceptance of diverse lifestyles recognizes the changing social context surrounding marriage and divorce. In recent decades, societal norms have shifted towards greater acceptance of various family structures, sexual orientations, and lifestyle choices. This increased acceptance allows individuals to make decisions that align with their personal identities, often leading to a willingness to exit marriages that are unfulfilling or do not conform to their values. Additionally, as societal stigma surrounding divorce has lessened, more individuals feel empowered to pursue divorce without fear of societal repercussions. The other statements do not accurately reflect the complexities of the divorce rate. For instance, while some data may indicate a decline in divorce rates in specific demographics, this is not universally applicable to all groups and may not be primarily influenced by religious support. Moreover, the claim that divorce only affects lower-income families overlooks the pervasive nature of divorce across all socioeconomic strata. Lastly, a significant body of research demonstrates that women's autonomy, including financial independence and educational attainment, does have a correlation with divorce rates, suggesting that women's increased autonomy often plays a role in their decision to end an unsatisfactory marriage.

4. What age range corresponds to the Concrete Operational stage in Piaget's theory?

- A. 0-2 years
- B. 2-7 years
- C. 7-11 years**
- D. 11+ years

The Concrete Operational stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development is characterized by the ability to think logically about concrete objects and events. This stage typically occurs between the ages of 7 and 11 years. During this period, children develop skills such as conservation (understanding that quantity does not change despite changes in shape or appearance), classification (being able to group objects based on shared characteristics), and the ability to perform operations mentally rather than purely physically. At this stage, children's cognitive processes become more organized and coherent as they engage with the world around them in a more structured way. They start to think logically about concrete situations but may still struggle with abstract or hypothetical concepts, which are developed later in the Formal Operational stage, beginning around age 11. In summary, the age range of 7 to 11 years is crucial for the development of logical thinking about tangible, real-world objects and situations, defining the Concrete Operational stage in Piaget's theory.

5. Which of the following is an example of a central trait?

- A. Perseverance
- B. Shyness**
- C. Leadership
- D. Greed

A central trait refers to a characteristic that is fundamental to a person's overall personality and has a significant influence on their behavior across various situations. Shyness is a prime example of a central trait because it encapsulates a broad category of behaviors that influence how a person interacts socially, manages relationships, and responds to social stimuli. It defines a core aspect of one's identity and affects various domains of life, leading to a consistent pattern in social interactions. In contrast, the other traits, while they may describe significant aspects of an individual's personality, can be more situation-specific or less foundational. For instance, perseverance, leadership, and greed can manifest under certain conditions but do not necessarily define the individual's personality in a comprehensive way. They may be better categorized as secondary traits, which, while important, do not encapsulate a person's overall behavior across diverse contexts as effectively as shyness does.

6. What neurotransmitter is considered the most common excitatory neurotransmitter in the central nervous system?

- A. Dopamine.
- B. Glutamate.**
- C. Norepinephrine.
- D. Serotonin.

Glutamate is recognized as the most common excitatory neurotransmitter in the central nervous system (CNS). It plays a critical role in synaptic transmission, promoting the activation of neurons. Glutamate is essential for various brain functions, including learning and memory, due to its involvement in strengthening synaptic connections through processes such as long-term potentiation. Excitatory neurotransmitters, such as glutamate, facilitate the transmission of impulses by depolarizing the postsynaptic membrane, making it more likely to fire an action potential. This is in contrast to inhibitory neurotransmitters, which prevent action potentials from occurring. Dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin are also important neurotransmitters but primarily function in different mechanisms within the CNS. Dopamine is largely associated with reward pathways and motor control, norepinephrine is involved in arousal and alertness, while serotonin plays a significant role in mood regulation and sleep. None of these neurotransmitters primarily serve the excitatory role that glutamate does, which solidifies glutamate's position as the most common excitatory neurotransmitter in the central nervous system.

7. What is the main function of Wernicke's area?

- A. Speech production
- B. Speech comprehension**
- C. Language acquisition
- D. Memory processing

Wernicke's area is primarily responsible for speech comprehension. This region of the brain, located in the posterior part of the left temporal lobe for most right-handed individuals, plays a critical role in the understanding of spoken and written language. When a person hears or reads language, Wernicke's area allows them to interpret the meanings and concepts behind the words, enabling effective communication. The relationship between Wernicke's area and language comprehension can be observed in cases of Wernicke's aphasia, where individuals can produce fluent speech but may have significant difficulties in understanding language and may produce nonsensical sentences. This highlights the area's essential function in processing and making sense of linguistic information, demonstrating its role beyond mere speech production. Thus, the answer accurately captures the core function of Wernicke's area.

8. In which personality disorder does an individual feel a constant sense of emptiness and fear of abandonment?

- A. Narcissistic Personality Disorder
- B. Borderline Personality Disorder**
- C. Histrionic Personality Disorder
- D. Dependent Personality Disorder

The correct answer is Borderline Personality Disorder, which is characterized by intense emotions, unstable relationships, and significant feelings of emptiness. Individuals with this disorder often experience a profound fear of abandonment, which can lead them to engage in frantic efforts to avoid being left alone. This fear is often rooted in difficulties with self-image and identity, leading to fluctuating emotions and severe mood swings. The sense of emptiness that individuals experience can manifest as a chronic feeling of boredom or a lack of fulfillment in life, further exacerbating their relational instability. This emotional turmoil contributes to behaviors that may seek to fill that emptiness or alleviate the anxiety surrounding potential abandonment. In contrast, Narcissistic Personality Disorder primarily involves a sense of grandiosity and a need for admiration, with a lack of empathy for others, which doesn't align with the themes of emptiness and fear of abandonment. Histrionic Personality Disorder is marked by excessive emotionality and attention-seeking behavior but does not focus on the constant sense of emptiness. Lastly, Dependent Personality Disorder features a pervasive need to be taken care of, leading to submissive and clinging behaviors, but it does not typically emphasize the same level of emotional turmoil or fear of abandonment found in Borderline Personality Disorder.

9. In the context of the dramaturgical approach, what does 'front stage self' refer to?

- A. Behavior in private settings
- B. Behavior performed in front of an audience**
- C. Personal thoughts outside of social interactions
- D. Behavior that is inauthentic

The concept of 'front stage self' in the dramaturgical approach, developed by sociologist Erving Goffman, refers specifically to the behavior that individuals showcase in social settings where they are aware of being observed by others. When we engage in 'front stage' behavior, we are presenting ourselves in a way that aligns with societal expectations and norms, often altering our true selves to fit the role we are playing in a given social interaction. This aligns closely with the idea that one's demeanor, language, and actions are consciously crafted to create a specific impression on the audience, reflecting an awareness of the social context. In contrast to private behavior or personal thoughts, which fall into more private or 'back stage' categories, the 'front stage self' embodies the persona we adopt when we are in public spaces or interacting with others, fully aware of their gaze and judgments. Understanding this distinction is crucial in grasping how individuals navigate their social environments, adapting their behaviors to suit the context and the audience, thereby illustrating the complex performance of identity in everyday interactions.

10. What aspect of memory is likely to decline more significantly with age?

- A. Recognition memory
- B. Immediate recall
- C. Free recall**
- D. Procedural memory

Free recall is a type of memory task that involves retrieving information without any cues, which requires more effortful processing and the organization of information in memory. Research shows that free recall tasks tend to decline more significantly with age compared to other types of memory. This decline can be attributed to factors such as reduced processing speed, difficulties with cognitive flexibility, and challenges in creating and maintaining the organizational structures needed for effective retrieval without prompts. In contrast, recognition memory, which involves identifying previously learned information when presented with it, is generally more stable with age. Immediate recall, or the ability to retrieve information shortly after learning, may also decline but tends to be less affected than free recall. Procedural memory, which involves the memory for skills and tasks (such as riding a bike or typing), is known to be relatively preserved in older adults, even as other aspects of memory decline. Thus, free recall stands out as the aspect most likely to decline significantly with aging.

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://mcat-psychsoc.examzify.com>

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

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