

National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) Behavior Change Specialization (BCS) Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Table of Contents

Copyright	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
How to Use This Guide	4
Questions	5
Answers	8
Explanations	10
Next Steps	16

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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. How does habit formation contribute to behavioral change?**
 - A. It requires continuous effort**
 - B. It creates automaticity in behaviors**
 - C. It complicates decision-making**
 - D. It eliminates the need for support**

- 2. How can fitness professionals best support client goal achievement?**
 - A. By allowing clients to set unrealistic goals**
 - B. By dismissing their concerns about progress**
 - C. By collaborating and adjusting plans based on client feedback**
 - D. By taking complete control of their goals**

- 3. What is a key characteristic of the contemplation stage in the stages of change model?**
 - A. Individuals actively modifying their behavior**
 - B. Individuals considering making a change but not ready to act**
 - C. Individuals unaware of the problem**
 - D. Individuals maintaining a habit after initial changes**

- 4. Define the term "behavioral contract."**
 - A. An informal agreement among friends**
 - B. An agreement between a client and coach detailing behavior change goals**
 - C. A set of consequences for failing to change**
 - D. A guideline for healthy eating**

- 5. What effect can environmental modification have on behavior change?**
 - A. It complicates the process**
 - B. It can remove barriers and facilitate healthier choices**
 - C. It discourages social interactions**
 - D. It is mainly psychological**

- 6. Which of the following is an example of a process goal?**
- A. Drink an extra 32 oz of water per day**
 - B. Reduce daily calorie intake from 3,000 to 1,500**
 - C. Lose 20 pounds**
 - D. Control my appetite**
- 7. What role does self-efficacy play in the process of behavior change?**
- A. A. It decreases motivation**
 - B. B. It promotes reliance on external motivation**
 - C. C. It enhances belief in one's capabilities**
 - D. D. It has no significant impact**
- 8. Which theory explains the process by which the imagery of a motor skill facilitates learning by neuromuscular signals?**
- A. Psychoneuromuscular theory**
 - B. Sarcoplasmic reticular theory**
 - C. Acetylcholine theory**
 - D. Neuromuscular efficiency theory**
- 9. Which compliance technique involves making a small request first?**
- A. Door-in-the-face**
 - B. Slam the door**
 - C. Foot-in-the-door**
 - D. That's not all**
- 10. What are the five stages in the Transtheoretical Model?**
- A. Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, Maintenance**
 - B. Awareness, Planning, Action, Reflection, Stability**
 - C. Engagement, Action, Evaluation, Adjustment, Progress**
 - D. Prevention, Action, Feedback, Maintenance, Evaluation**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. How does habit formation contribute to behavioral change?

- A. It requires continuous effort
- B. It creates automaticity in behaviors**
- C. It complicates decision-making
- D. It eliminates the need for support

Habit formation plays a crucial role in driving behavioral change because it fosters automaticity in behaviors. When a behavior becomes habitual, it requires less conscious thought and effort to engage in, making it easier for individuals to consistently perform desired actions. This automaticity reduces the mental resources needed for decision-making, allowing individuals to integrate positive behaviors into their daily routines with minimal resistance. Consequently, when habits are formed, the likelihood of maintaining those behaviors increases, which is vital for long-lasting change. This is especially important in the context of behavior change strategies, as individuals are more likely to persist in routines that have become second nature to them. Over time, as these behaviors are repeated, the effort needed to maintain them diminishes, promoting adherence and fostering a healthier lifestyle. Given the context of the other options, it's clear that they do not accurately reflect the positive influence of habit formation on behavioral change. Continuous effort may be required initially to establish a habit, but the goal is to transition to automaticity. Complexity in decision-making contradicts the purpose of forming habits, which is to simplify choices. The assertion that habit formation eliminates the need for support overlooks the fact that initial guidance and encouragement are often essential for establishing new habits.

2. How can fitness professionals best support client goal achievement?

- A. By allowing clients to set unrealistic goals
- B. By dismissing their concerns about progress
- C. By collaborating and adjusting plans based on client feedback**
- D. By taking complete control of their goals

Supporting client goal achievement is most effectively accomplished by collaborating with clients and adjusting plans based on their feedback. This approach fosters an environment of partnership and communication, ensuring that fitness professionals take into account the individual needs, preferences, and concerns of their clients. When professionals include clients in the goal-setting and planning process, it enhances the likelihood that clients will commit to the program and feel empowered in their journey toward achieving their goals. Adjusting plans based on client feedback demonstrates responsiveness and flexibility, which can boost motivation and adherence to the fitness program. This collaborative approach encourages clients to express their feelings about their progress and challenges, allowing for a supportive and adaptive coaching relationship that can lead to better outcomes. By contrast, other approaches, such as allowing clients to set unrealistic goals or dismissing their concerns, are unlikely to foster the positive environment necessary for personal growth and success. Having complete control over a client's goals undermines their autonomy and can lead to disengagement, as clients may feel disempowered in their fitness journey. They are more likely to succeed when they are active participants in the process rather than passive recipients of instructions.

3. What is a key characteristic of the contemplation stage in the stages of change model?

- A. Individuals actively modifying their behavior**
- B. Individuals considering making a change but not ready to act**
- C. Individuals unaware of the problem**
- D. Individuals maintaining a habit after initial changes**

The contemplation stage is characterized by individuals who are actively thinking about making a change in their behavior but have not yet committed to taking action. At this stage, they are often weighing the pros and cons of their current behavior versus the potential benefits of changing. This reflective process can involve recognition of the need for change, acknowledging barriers, and considering how a new behavior could fit into their lives. In this stage, individuals are more aware of the issues they face and are beginning to focus on the possibility of change, which distinguishes it from the pre-contemplation stage, where individuals may not yet recognize that they need to make a change. The contemplation stage is crucial because it's a step towards motivation and readiness to move into the preparation and action stages, where actual behavior modifications take place. Understanding this stage is essential for practitioners to effectively support individuals in their journey towards change.

4. Define the term "behavioral contract."

- A. An informal agreement among friends**
- B. An agreement between a client and coach detailing behavior change goals**
- C. A set of consequences for failing to change**
- D. A guideline for healthy eating**

The term "behavioral contract" refers specifically to an agreement between a client and a coach that outlines the goals related to behavior change. This contract typically details the specific actions the client commits to, the time frame for these actions, and the methods of accountability. By formalizing the goals and expectations in a behavioral contract, both the client and coach have a mutual understanding of the aims of the behavior change process, which can significantly enhance commitment and facilitate progress. While informal agreements can involve friends and can be helpful, they do not carry the structured approach that a behavioral contract has in a coaching context. A set of consequences for failing to change might be part of a behavioral contract but does not encompass the entirety of the agreement and its purpose. Similarly, guidelines for healthy eating are important in promoting nutritious choices but do not specifically relate to the contractual nature of behavior change. The key aspect of a behavioral contract is its focus on mutual agreement and defined goals between a coach and a client in pursuit of behavior change.

5. What effect can environmental modification have on behavior change?

- A. It complicates the process**
- B. It can remove barriers and facilitate healthier choices**
- C. It discourages social interactions**
- D. It is mainly psychological**

Environmental modification plays a crucial role in behavior change by removing barriers and facilitating healthier choices. This approach focuses on changing the surroundings in which individuals make decisions, thus making it easier for them to adopt positive behaviors. For instance, when the environment is adjusted to promote healthier eating habits, such as placing fruits and vegetables at eye level in a kitchen or providing easy access to recreational areas for physical activity, individuals are more likely to make healthier choices without feeling overwhelmed. These modifications can lead to an increase in physical activity, better dietary habits, and overall improvements in health and well-being, as they create a supportive environment that encourages positive behaviors. In this context, focusing on the physical layout of environments or accessing resources can significantly lighten the cognitive load involved in making health-related decisions, leading to sustained behavior change.

6. Which of the following is an example of a process goal?

- A. Drink an extra 32 oz of water per day**
- B. Reduce daily calorie intake from 3,000 to 1,500**
- C. Lose 20 pounds**
- D. Control my appetite**

A process goal is focused on the actions or behaviors one can control, which ultimately lead to achieving an outcome goal. In this context, controlling appetite reflects an intention to implement specific habits that directly influence eating behaviors, making it a clear example of a process goal. This choice emphasizes the ongoing effort in managing one's behavior, which is essential when making lasting lifestyle changes. By focusing on appetite control, one can develop strategies to prevent overeating or make healthier food choices, establishing a foundation for achieving broader objectives like weight loss or improved health. In contrast, the other options presented are examples of outcome goals which are quantifiable and result-oriented. Drinking a specific amount of water or reducing calorie intake are specific targets that reflect desired outcomes but do not encapsulate the behaviors necessary to reach those goals in a way that encourages a process-oriented mindset. Similarly, losing a certain amount of weight is a clear outcome and does not address the behaviors required to bring about this change.

7. What role does self-efficacy play in the process of behavior change?

- A. A. It decreases motivation**
- B. B. It promotes reliance on external motivation**
- C. C. It enhances belief in one's capabilities**
- D. D. It has no significant impact**

Self-efficacy significantly influences an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks and achieve goals. When individuals possess high self-efficacy, they are more likely to take on challenges, persist through difficulties, and maintain motivation toward their goals. This belief in one's capabilities fosters resilience and encourages proactive behavior changes. In the context of behavior change, a strong sense of self-efficacy contributes to a higher likelihood of successfully adopting and adhering to new behaviors, as individuals feel more confident in their ability to manage obstacles and setbacks. In contrast, decreased motivation or reliance on external motivators tends to stem from low self-efficacy, making these options incongruent with the positive impact that self-efficacy has on behavior change. Additionally, suggesting that self-efficacy has no significant impact misrepresents its crucial role in facilitating personal growth and sustainable change in behavior.

8. Which theory explains the process by which the imagery of a motor skill facilitates learning by neuromuscular signals?

- A. Psychoneuromuscular theory**
- B. Sarcoplasmic reticular theory**
- C. Acetylcholine theory**
- D. Neuromuscular efficiency theory**

Psychoneuromuscular theory is recognized for its role in explaining how mental imagery can enhance the learning and performance of motor skills. This theory posits that when a person imagines performing a specific movement, their brain sends similar signals to the muscles as it would during the actual performance of that movement. This results in neuromuscular responses that help reinforce the pathways necessary for executing the movement effectively. Through visualization, the brain engages in a practice that may lead to increased muscle coordination and strength, as it activates the same neuromuscular patterns involved during the actual skill execution. This mental rehearsal leads to improved motor learning and retention of skills by creating a stronger connection between the brain and muscles. The other options do not specifically address the relationship between imagery and neuromuscular signals in the context of motor skill learning, making psychoneuromuscular theory the most apt choice to answer the question.

9. Which compliance technique involves making a small request first?

- A. Door-in-the-face**
- B. Slam the door**
- C. Foot-in-the-door**
- D. That's not all**

The technique that involves making a small request first is known as the foot-in-the-door method. This strategy is based on the principle that once an individual agrees to a small request, they are more likely to comply with a larger request later on. The initial small request serves as a foothold, making it easier for the individual to say yes to subsequent, larger requests. This approach is effective because it capitalizes on the psychological concept of commitment. When someone commits to a minor task, they begin to feel a sense of obligation, and as a result, they are more inclined to continue supporting the requester or the idea presented. This can be particularly useful in behavior change contexts, as it encourages gradual adherence to larger lifestyle changes or goals. In contrast, the door-in-the-face technique involves making a large request first, with the expectation that it will be refused, allowing the requester to follow up with a smaller request. The slam the door technique does not pertain to compliance strategies as it suggests outright refusal. The 'that's not all' technique involves adding extras to the request to increase compliance but does not involve an initial smaller request.

10. What are the five stages in the Transtheoretical Model?

- A. Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, Maintenance**
- B. Awareness, Planning, Action, Reflection, Stability**
- C. Engagement, Action, Evaluation, Adjustment, Progress**
- D. Prevention, Action, Feedback, Maintenance, Evaluation**

The five stages in the Transtheoretical Model, which is fundamental in understanding behavior change, are indeed Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, and Maintenance. Each of these stages represents a different level of readiness for change. In the Precontemplation stage, individuals are not yet considering change, often unaware of their problem behavior. The Contemplation stage involves acknowledging the need for change and starting to think about making it. During the Preparation stage, individuals begin to make plans and set intentions for change. The Action stage is where individuals actively implement strategies to change their behavior. Finally, the Maintenance stage focuses on sustaining the new behavior over time and preventing relapse. This model effectively illustrates the progression individuals go through in their journey toward change, thus providing practitioners with strategies that are appropriate for each stage. Understanding these stages is essential for designing interventions that can support individuals at their specific point in the behavior change process.

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://nasm-behaviorchangespecialization.examzify.com>

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

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