

NCFE Earth Science 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. Which is most likely to occur before a volcanic eruption?**
 - A. An increase in acid rain production**
 - B. An increase in earthquake activity**
 - C. An increase in lava flow**
 - D. An increase in mud flow**

- 2. What phenomenon occurs when a glacier melts and exposes the underlying rock?**
 - A. Glacial deposition**
 - B. Glacial erosion**
 - C. Weathering**
 - D. Ground moraine**

- 3. What is the process in which organisms die and their remains are preserved in sediment called?**
 - A. Metamorphosis**
 - B. Fossilization**
 - C. Mineralization**
 - D. Corrosion**

- 4. Which feature is commonly associated with divergent plate boundaries?**
 - A. A. Mountain ranges**
 - B. B. Ocean ridges**
 - C. C. Deep ocean trenches**
 - D. D. Transform faults**

- 5. What is the best method for conserving worldwide freshwater resources?**
 - A. Build more roads and highways for cars and trucks**
 - B. Increase land used to raise cattle**
 - C. Develop more modern coal-powered plants**
 - D. Use more efficient irrigation techniques**

- 6. What is the primary driver of the water cycle?**
- A. Wind energy**
 - B. Solar energy**
 - C. Geothermal energy**
 - D. Tidal energy**
- 7. How does the age of seafloor sediments change with increasing distance from the ocean ridge?**
- A. Age stays the same.**
 - B. Age increases.**
 - C. Age decreases.**
 - D. Age varies without a pattern.**
- 8. Which of the following is NOT a major component of soil?**
- A. earthworms**
 - B. humus**
 - C. mineral matter**
 - D. air**
- 9. Which of the following is an example of human impact on climate changes?**
- A. the greenhouse effect**
 - B. the amount of greenhouse gases emitted**
 - C. changes in solar output**
 - D. changes in the tilt of Earth's axis**
- 10. What change occurred after horses were removed from a fenced area, leading to less soil erosion on rainy days?**
- A. The grass grew and kept the soil intact.**
 - B. The fence kept the soil contained.**
 - C. The soil was completely gone.**
 - D. The amount of rain decreased.**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Which is most likely to occur before a volcanic eruption?

- A. An increase in acid rain production**
- B. An increase in earthquake activity**
- C. An increase in lava flow**
- D. An increase in mud flow**

An increase in earthquake activity is most likely to occur before a volcanic eruption because volcanic eruptions are often preceded by the movement of magma within the Earth's crust. As magma rises towards the surface, it can create pressure and fracture surrounding rock. This process generates seismic activity, resulting in earthquakes. Scientists commonly use seismic monitoring to predict volcanic activity, as increased frequency and intensity of earthquakes can indicate that an eruption may be imminent. In contrast, the other options do not typically serve as reliable indicators of an impending volcanic event. Acid rain production is generally related to atmospheric conditions and pollutants rather than volcanic processes. An increase in lava flow occurs after a volcano has erupted, as the magma escapes to the surface. Similarly, mud flows, often associated with volcanic activity, happen during or after an eruption when water combines with volcanic ash and debris, rather than before the eruption itself.

2. What phenomenon occurs when a glacier melts and exposes the underlying rock?

- A. Glacial deposition**
- B. Glacial erosion**
- C. Weathering**
- D. Ground moraine**

When a glacier melts and reveals the underlying rock, this process is known as glacial erosion. Glaciation involves the movement of large ice masses that carve and reshape the landscape as they advance and retreat. As a glacier flows over the land, it can scratch, gouge, and transport rock material, leading to erosion of the underlying bedrock. This erosion occurs due to the immense weight of the glacier and the presence of embedded debris, which acts like sandpaper against the rock surfaces. When the glacier melts, the previously covered rock is laid bare, showing the effects of this erosive process, such as striations (scratches) left on the rock surface. This exposure is a clear result of the glacier's movement and the erosion that took place while it was present. Consequently, glacial erosion represents a crucial aspect of how glacial landscapes are formed and modified over time.

3. What is the process in which organisms die and their remains are preserved in sediment called?

- A. Metamorphosis**
- B. Fossilization**
- C. Mineralization**
- D. Corrosion**

The process in which organisms die and their remains are preserved in sediment is known as fossilization. This is a critical concept in paleontology, as fossilization allows for the preservation of biological material over geological timescales, enabling scientists to study ancient life forms and their environments. Fossilization typically involves several stages, beginning with the quick burial of the organism in sediment, which protects it from decay. Over time, the organic material can be replaced or filled in with minerals, leading to the formation of fossils. This preservation can occur in various forms, including the creation of molds or casts, and can involve different mechanisms such as permineralization, where minerals infiltrate the cellular structure of the remains, or carbonization, where organic materials are reduced to carbon. In contrast, processes such as metamorphosis refer to changes in the form of an organism, often during its life cycle (like the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly), and do not relate to the preservation of remains. Mineralization specifically focuses on the replacement of organic materials with minerals but is more of a specific mechanism within the broader context of fossilization. Corrosion involves the deterioration of materials, typically due to chemical reactions with the environment, and does not pertain

4. Which feature is commonly associated with divergent plate boundaries?

- A. A. Mountain ranges**
- B. B. Ocean ridges**
- C. C. Deep ocean trenches**
- D. D. Transform faults**

Divergent plate boundaries are characterized by the movement of tectonic plates away from each other, which can lead to the formation of new oceanic crust. This process occurs primarily at mid-ocean ridges, where the upwelling of magma creates new seafloor as it cools and solidifies. As the plates separate, it allows magma from the mantle to rise, which ultimately forms the underwater mountains known as ocean ridges. This dynamic activity is a hallmark of divergent boundaries, making ocean ridges a defining feature. Mountain ranges are typically associated with convergent boundaries, where plates push against each other, resulting in uplift and the formation of mountain systems. Deep ocean trenches represent areas where one tectonic plate subducts beneath another, characteristic of convergent boundaries. Transform faults, while they represent another type of plate boundary where plates slide past each other, do not involve the creation of new crust as found at divergent boundaries. Each of these features is linked to specific tectonic processes and therefore underscores why ocean ridges are distinctly connected to divergent plate boundaries.

5. What is the best method for conserving worldwide freshwater resources?

- A. Build more roads and highways for cars and trucks**
- B. Increase land used to raise cattle**
- C. Develop more modern coal-powered plants**
- D. Use more efficient irrigation techniques**

Using more efficient irrigation techniques is the best method for conserving worldwide freshwater resources because irrigation accounts for a substantial portion of global freshwater use, especially in agriculture. Traditional irrigation methods can result in significant water loss through evaporation, runoff, and inefficient water application. By adopting more efficient techniques, such as drip irrigation or smart irrigation systems, farmers can deliver water more directly to the plant roots, minimizing waste and enhancing water use efficiency. This not only conserves freshwater but also supports better crop yields, which is crucial as global populations grow and the demand for food increases. Improved irrigation practices can help ensure that water resources are used sustainably, benefiting both agricultural productivity and environmental conservation. Other choices would not address the critical issue of freshwater conservation. Building more roads and highways increases impermeable surfaces, leading to more runoff and potentially less water available for direct use. Increasing land for cattle can elevate water consumption since livestock farming is resource-intensive. Developing more coal-powered plants impacts freshwater resources negatively through pollution and can also contribute to climate change, which affects water availability. Therefore, focusing on efficient irrigation is a proactive step toward sustainable water resource management.

6. What is the primary driver of the water cycle?

- A. Wind energy**
- B. Solar energy**
- C. Geothermal energy**
- D. Tidal energy**

The primary driver of the water cycle is solar energy. This is because the sun provides the energy required to evaporate water from oceans, lakes, and rivers, transforming it from liquid to vapor. This process of evaporation is essential in initiating the water cycle. Once water vapor rises into the atmosphere, it cools and condenses into clouds, eventually leading to precipitation in the form of rain or snow, which returns water to the Earth's surface. Solar energy is pivotal in driving these processes, as it not only fuels evaporation but also influences atmospheric temperatures and circulation patterns, which are crucial for the movement of water vapor within the atmosphere. While other forms of energy, like wind, geothermal, and tidal energy, play important roles in various Earth processes, they do not have the same fundamental impact on the water cycle as solar energy does.

7. How does the age of seafloor sediments change with increasing distance from the ocean ridge?

- A. Age stays the same.**
- B. Age increases.**
- C. Age decreases.**
- D. Age varies without a pattern.**

The age of seafloor sediments increases with increasing distance from the ocean ridge due to the process of seafloor spreading. At mid-ocean ridges, where tectonic plates are diverging, new oceanic crust is formed by volcanic activity. As this new crust cools, it creates fresh seafloor that accumulates sediments over time. As the tectonic plates continue to move apart, older parts of the seafloor are pushed away from the ridge, while new material is continuously generated at the ridge itself. Consequently, the sediments deposited on the ocean floor will be younger closer to the ridge and progressively older as you move farther away from it. This pattern reflects a consistent geological process: the youngest sediments lie directly atop the newest crust formed at the ridges, while older sediments are found further along from these areas. This principle is fundamental in geology and helps scientists understand plate tectonics, seafloor spreading, and the geological history of the Earth's ocean floors.

8. Which of the following is NOT a major component of soil?

- A. earthworms**
- B. humus**
- C. mineral matter**
- D. air**

Soil is composed of several key components that contribute to its structure and function. The major components of soil primarily include mineral matter, organic matter (such as humus), water, and air. These elements work together to support plant life and other organisms. Humus refers to the organic component of soil that is formed from the decay of plant and animal matter. It plays a crucial role in enriching soil with nutrients, improving its structure, and enhancing its ability to hold water. Mineral matter, which consists of particles derived from the weathering of rocks, forms the bulk of the soil and provides essential nutrients to plants. Air is also a vital component of soil that occupies the spaces between soil particles. It allows for the exchange of gases, which is important for root respiration and the overall health of the soil ecosystem. Earthworms, while beneficial for soil as they aerate it and contribute to the decomposition of organic matter, are considered soil fauna rather than a primary component. Their presence enhances soil quality but does not classify them as a fundamental part of soil structure itself. This distinction is what makes the presence of earthworms not a major component of soil compared to humus, mineral matter, and air.

9. Which of the following is an example of human impact on climate changes?

- A. the greenhouse effect**
- B. the amount of greenhouse gases emitted**
- C. changes in solar output**
- D. changes in the tilt of Earth's axis**

The correct answer indicates that the amount of greenhouse gases emitted is an example of human impact on climate changes. This is because human activities, such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes, release significant quantities of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide and methane, into the atmosphere. These gases trap heat from the sun, contributing to the greenhouse effect, which leads to global warming and subsequent climate change. While the greenhouse effect itself is a natural process essential for maintaining Earth's temperature, human activities have intensified this effect by increasing the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Changes in solar output and variations in the tilt of Earth's axis are natural phenomena that also influence climate but are not directly attributable to human activity. Therefore, they do not represent human impact on climate changes. The emphasis on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted underscores the extent to which human actions are altering the climate system, making it a prime example of how humanity influences the Earth's climate.

10. What change occurred after horses were removed from a fenced area, leading to less soil erosion on rainy days?

- A. The grass grew and kept the soil intact.**
- B. The fence kept the soil contained.**
- C. The soil was completely gone.**
- D. The amount of rain decreased.**

The correct choice highlights the impact of plant growth on soil stability. When horses are removed from a fenced area, the absence of grazing pressure allows grass and other vegetation to rejuvenate and grow. This plant growth is crucial because grasses have extensive root systems that anchor the soil in place. During rainy days, the roots of these plants help hold the soil together, reducing the amount of loose soil that can be washed away with rainfall. As a result, the reestablishment of grass contributes to enhanced soil retention and minimizes erosion, which is particularly important in preventing water runoff that can lead to further soil degradation. In contrast, the other options do not accurately reflect the ecological processes at play. The idea that the fence contained the soil does not address the importance of plant growth in preventing erosion. The assertion that the soil was completely gone is inaccurate, as the focus is on how the soil is preserved rather than lost. Lastly, a decrease in the amount of rain would not directly relate to the effects of horse removal; rather, it is the vegetation response that mitigates erosion during existing rainfall.

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://ncfeearthscience.examzify.com>

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

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