

# Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) Vocabulary - Grade 8 Practice Test (Sample)

## Study Guide



**Everything you need from our exam experts!**

**This is a sample study guide. To access the full version with hundreds of 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. Don't worry about getting everything right, 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, and take breaks to retain information better.**

## **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.**

## **7. Use Other Tools**

**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!**

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## **Questions**

- 1. What is a "call to action" in writing?**
  - A. An invitation for the reader to take a specific action based on the content**
  - B. A summary of the main points presented**
  - C. A statement that introduces the topic**
  - D. A closing remark that wraps up the piece**
- 2. What literary device is characterized by exaggeration or overstatement?**
  - A. Metaphor**
  - B. Hyperbole**
  - C. Simile**
  - D. Alliteration**
- 3. What is personification?**
  - A. A literary technique that involves exaggeration**
  - B. An object or abstract idea given human qualities or human form**
  - C. A direct comparison between two unlike things**
  - D. A factual representation of characters**
- 4. Which of the following best describes the function of a gerund?**
  - A. To suggest an action in future tense**
  - B. To serve as a noun while maintaining a verb form**
  - C. To modify nouns and pronouns**
  - D. To indicate possession or a relationship**
- 5. In literary works, what role does conflict play?**
  - A. It serves as the final resolution of the narrative**
  - B. It is the driving force that propels the story forward**
  - C. It defines the character's personality traits**
  - D. It represents the time and place of the story**



- 6. In literature, what does "theme" refer to?**
- A. The author's life story**
  - B. The central idea, topic, or message**
  - C. The setting of the story**
  - D. The chronological order of events**
- 7. What is a claim in writing?**
- A. A thesis statement or main point in an argument**
  - B. A piece of evidence to support an argument**
  - C. A rhetorical question posed for effect**
  - D. An example used to illustrate a point**
- 8. What does "analyze" mean in the context of reading a text?**
- A. To memorize all the facts presented**
  - B. To break down the content into smaller parts for examination**
  - C. To summarize the key points for clarity**
  - D. To choose a side in a debate**
- 9. What does it mean to "summarize" a text?**
- A. To criticize the main points**
  - B. To provide detailed examples**
  - C. To give a brief statement of main ideas**
  - D. To analyze the supporting details**
- 10. Which option best describes the setting of a story?**
- A. The main theme of the narrative**
  - B. The time and place in which the story unfolds**
  - C. The key events that happen in the plot**
  - D. The main character's journey**

## **Answers**

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

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## **Explanations**

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## 1. What is a "call to action" in writing?

- A. An invitation for the reader to take a specific action based on the content**
- B. A summary of the main points presented**
- C. A statement that introduces the topic**
- D. A closing remark that wraps up the piece**

A "call to action" in writing is an invitation for the reader to take a specific action based on the content presented. It serves as a prompt that encourages the audience to engage further, whether that means taking steps to learn more, making a purchase, signing a petition, or simply reflecting on the issue at hand. This technique aims to make the content more impactful and drive the reader toward a desired outcome, making it an essential component in persuasive writing. In contrast, other options describe different elements of writing. Summaries provide a recap of the main points but do not initiate any action. A statement that introduces the topic sets the stage for the discussion but lacks the directive quality of a call to action. A closing remark sums up the piece without actively prompting the reader to act. Each of these plays a role in writing, but only a call to action specifically seeks to motivate the reader.

## 2. What literary device is characterized by exaggeration or overstatement?

- A. Metaphor**
- B. Hyperbole**
- C. Simile**
- D. Alliteration**

The literary device characterized by exaggeration or overstatement is hyperbole. This technique is often used to create a strong emotional response or to emphasize a particular point. For example, saying "I've told you a million times" is an exaggerated way to express frustration over repeated requests. Hyperbole is not meant to be taken literally; rather, it enhances the meaning or impact of a statement through its dramatic flair. On the other hand, a metaphor makes a direct comparison between two unrelated things without using "like" or "as," which can create vivid imagery but does not specifically imply exaggeration. A simile, which does employ "like" or "as" in its comparisons, also focuses more on creating resemblance rather than overstatement. Alliteration involves the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words to create rhythm or focus in language, but it does not engage with exaggeration either.

### 3. What is personification?

- A. A literary technique that involves exaggeration
- B. An object or abstract idea given human qualities or human form**
- C. A direct comparison between two unlike things
- D. A factual representation of characters

Personification is a literary device in which human qualities or traits are attributed to an object, animal, or abstract concept. This technique allows writers to create vivid imagery and convey emotions by giving life-like characteristics to non-human elements. For instance, saying "the wind whispered through the trees" gives the wind the human ability to whisper, thus evoking a sensory and emotional response from the reader. This choice captures the essence of personification, as it illustrates how writers can make descriptions more relatable and impactful by integrating human attributes into non-human subjects. The other options refer to different literary techniques: exaggeration (hyperbole), direct comparisons (simile or metaphor), and factual representations (realism), none of which align with the definition of personification.

### 4. Which of the following best describes the function of a gerund?

- A. To suggest an action in future tense
- B. To serve as a noun while maintaining a verb form**
- C. To modify nouns and pronouns
- D. To indicate possession or a relationship

The function of a gerund is to serve as a noun while maintaining a verb form. Gerunds are created by adding -ing to a verb, transforming it into a noun that can act in various grammatical roles typically reserved for nouns. For example, in the sentence "Swimming is fun," "swimming" is a gerund functioning as the subject of the sentence. This dual nature allows gerunds to convey action while being treated as a noun, enabling them to fit seamlessly into sentences in a way that emphasizes both the action and the noun's role. The other options do not correctly define the role of a gerund. For instance, suggesting an action in future tense relates more to verbs in their infinitive forms or specific constructions rather than gerunds. Modifying nouns and pronouns describes the function of adjectives or adverbs, and indicating possession or a relationship pertains to possessive forms or prepositions rather than gerunds. Thus, the description that matches the function of gerunds is that they operate as nouns with an inherent verb quality.

**5. In literary works, what role does conflict play?**

- A. It serves as the final resolution of the narrative
- B. It is the driving force that propels the story forward**
- C. It defines the character's personality traits
- D. It represents the time and place of the story

Conflict is essential in literary works because it is the driving force that propels the story forward. When characters face challenges, dilemmas, or opposition, it creates tension and intrigue, capturing the reader's attention. This struggle often leads to character development and plot progression, as characters must confront their challenges, make decisions, and evolve throughout the narrative. In addition, conflict typically leads to the climax of the story, where the stakes are highest and the outcomes are uncertain. The resolution of this conflict ultimately shapes the narrative and influences the themes of the work. Without conflict, the story would lack movement and engagement, as there would be little to challenge the characters or stimulate the reader's interest. Thus, conflict plays a crucial role in not just moving the plot along, but also enhancing the overall depth and impact of the literary work.

**6. In literature, what does "theme" refer to?**

- A. The author's life story
- B. The central idea, topic, or message**
- C. The setting of the story
- D. The chronological order of events

The term "theme" in literature refers to the central idea, topic, or message that the author conveys through their work. It encompasses the underlying message or significant concept that runs throughout the narrative, influencing the characters, plot, and overall story. The theme may explore universal aspects of the human experience, such as love, conflict, morality, or identity, and invites readers to reflect on these ideas. In contrast to other elements like the author's life story, which provides context but is not the core message of the text, or the setting, which describes where and when the story takes place, the theme serves as the foundation of the text's meaning. Additionally, the chronological order of events, though important for narrative structure, does not convey the deeper significance the theme offers. Understanding the theme allows readers to engage with the text on a deeper level, recognizing its relevance to their own lives and society.

## 7. What is a claim in writing?

- A. A thesis statement or main point in an argument**
- B. A piece of evidence to support an argument**
- C. A rhetorical question posed for effect**
- D. An example used to illustrate a point**

A claim in writing is fundamentally understood as a thesis statement or the main point in an argument. It is the assertion that an author sets out to prove or argue throughout their writing. This statement acts as a crucial foundation for the text, guiding the direction of the argument and helping the reader understand the author's stance on a particular issue. By establishing a clear claim, the writer provides a focal point that informs the supporting arguments and evidence presented in the work. The effectiveness of a claim often depends on its clarity and the strength of the arguments that support it. In contrast, other options are elements of writing that support or elaborate on the claim rather than define what a claim is. For instance, evidence is used to back up a claim, rhetorical questions are meant to provoke thought rather than state an argument, and examples function to clarify or illustrate points rather than serve as the main assertion itself.

## 8. What does "analyze" mean in the context of reading a text?

- A. To memorize all the facts presented**
- B. To break down the content into smaller parts for examination**
- C. To summarize the key points for clarity**
- D. To choose a side in a debate**

The term "analyze" in the context of reading a text refers to the process of breaking down the content into smaller parts for examination. This involves looking closely at different elements of the text, such as themes, characters, structure, and language, to better understand how they contribute to the overall meaning and message. Analyzing allows readers to explore not just what is said, but how it is said, and why it is significant. This deeper level of thinking helps in uncovering nuances and complexities that a simple reading may overlook, ultimately leading to a more thorough comprehension of the text. The other choices do not accurately reflect the concept of analysis. Memorizing facts focuses on retention rather than understanding, summarizing key points emphasizes brevity and clarity without the in-depth exploration that analysis entails, and choosing a side in a debate involves making a judgment rather than examining the text's components critically.



**9. What does it mean to "summarize" a text?**

- A. To criticize the main points**
- B. To provide detailed examples**
- C. To give a brief statement of main ideas**
- D. To analyze the supporting details**

To "summarize" a text means to distill its essential points into a concise form, focusing on the main ideas without extraneous details. This approach allows the reader to grasp the core message of the text quickly. When summarizing, it is important to identify key concepts and main arguments, which often involves rephrasing them in a way that eliminates unnecessary elaboration. In contrast, the options that involve criticizing the main points, providing detailed examples, or analyzing supporting details do not align with the definition of summarizing, because they require a deeper engagement with the text than simply condensing it to its main ideas. Summarizing is about creating a clear overview, not critiquing or dissecting information.

**10. Which option best describes the setting of a story?**

- A. The main theme of the narrative**
- B. The time and place in which the story unfolds**
- C. The key events that happen in the plot**
- D. The main character's journey**

The setting of a story refers specifically to the time and place in which the events occur. It forms the backdrop for the narrative and can greatly influence the mood, actions, and interactions of the characters. By establishing a particular time period and location, the setting can provide context and ambiance, giving readers a clearer understanding of the circumstances in which the characters find themselves. This can include details such as the geographical location, historical era, season, or even the social environment. Understanding the setting helps readers visualize the story and grasp how it affects the characters and plot development. In contrast, the other options do not capture the essence of what constitutes a setting. The theme refers to the underlying message or main idea of the story, key events comprise the plot which outlines the sequence of happenings, and the main character's journey focuses on their personal development and experiences throughout the narrative. None of these aspects directly represent the time and place component that defines the setting.

## 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](mailto:hello@examzify.com).**

**Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:**

**<https://pssavocabgrade8.examzify.com>**

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