

Physician Assistant College Admission Test (PA-CAT) Entrance Practice exam (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

- 1. What is the primary role of the large intestine?**
 - A. Digest food**
 - B. Absorb water and form feces**
 - C. Produce digestive enzymes**
 - D. Store and release insulin**
- 2. What is true about direct inguinal hernias?**
 - A. They are lateral to the inferior epigastric artery**
 - B. They course through the deep inguinal ring**
 - C. They are medial to the inferior epigastric artery**
 - D. They occur only in females**
- 3. What is a common characteristic of Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA)?**
 - A. Blood flows from the body to the lungs**
 - B. Blood intended for the body flows from the aorta to the lungs**
 - C. Blood is blocked from circulating**
 - D. Blood only flows in one direction where required**
- 4. Which organ is primarily responsible for the conduction of air to the lungs?**
 - A. Bronchi**
 - B. Trachea**
 - C. Esophagus**
 - D. Larynx**
- 5. What is the primary function of cranial nerves?**
 - A. Coordinate movement**
 - B. Facilitate sensory functions**
 - C. Enhance digestion**
 - D. Regulate blood pressure**
- 6. Which pH value indicates a neutral solution?**
 - A. 0**
 - B. 4**
 - C. 7**
 - D. 14**

- 7. Which structure allows air to pass to and from the lungs?**
- A. Bronchi**
 - B. Trachea**
 - C. Pharynx**
 - D. Larynx**
- 8. What hormone regulates stress response and is secreted by the adrenal cortex?**
- A. Adrenaline**
 - B. Cortisol**
 - C. GnRH**
 - D. GHRH**
- 9. What type of information does the posterior (dorsal) root of the spinal nerve carry?**
- A. Motor output**
 - B. Neurological reflexes**
 - C. Sensory input**
 - D. Autonomic functions**
- 10. What does the term 'gluconeogenesis' refer to?**
- A. The synthesis of glycogen from glucose**
 - B. The formation of glucose from non-carbohydrate sources**
 - C. The breakdown of glucose for energy**
 - D. The conversion of glucose into lactate**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is the primary role of the large intestine?

- A. Digest food
- B. Absorb water and form feces**
- C. Produce digestive enzymes
- D. Store and release insulin

The primary role of the large intestine is to absorb water and form feces. After the nutrients have been absorbed in the small intestine, the remaining waste material enters the large intestine, where water is reabsorbed into the body. This process helps to consolidate waste into a more solid form, allowing it to be excreted efficiently. The large intestine also houses beneficial bacteria that play a role in fermenting indigestible fibers, contributing to the overall health of the digestive system. The other functions mentioned in the other choices, such as digesting food or producing digestive enzymes, primarily take place in the stomach and small intestine, not in the large intestine. Additionally, the large intestine has no role in the storage or release of insulin, which is a function of the pancreas. Therefore, the correct answer underscores the essential function of the large intestine in maintaining fluid balance and preparing waste for elimination.

2. What is true about direct inguinal hernias?

- A. They are lateral to the inferior epigastric artery
- B. They course through the deep inguinal ring
- C. They are medial to the inferior epigastric artery**
- D. They occur only in females

Direct inguinal hernias occur due to a weakness in the abdominal wall, specifically in the region of the inguinal canal. These hernias protrude through a defect in the transversalis fascia and are considered medial to the inferior epigastric artery. This anatomical position is significant because it helps differentiate between direct and indirect inguinal hernias. Indirect inguinal hernias, in contrast, occur lateral to the inferior epigastric artery and pass through the deep inguinal ring. They are more common and can occur in both males and females, whereas direct inguinal hernias are predominantly found in males due to the structural differences in the male inguinal canal and the increased likelihood of developing weakness in this area over time. Additionally, the statement that direct inguinal hernias occur only in females is false, as they are much more common in males. Understanding these key anatomical and physiological principles related to hernias allows for better diagnosis and treatment strategies in clinical practice.

3. What is a common characteristic of Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA)?

- A. Blood flows from the body to the lungs
- B. Blood intended for the body flows from the aorta to the lungs**
- C. Blood is blocked from circulating
- D. Blood only flows in one direction where required

Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA) is a medical condition in which the ductus arteriosus, a blood vessel that connects the pulmonary artery to the aorta, remains open (patent) after birth. This is an important characteristic because the ductus arteriosus normally closes shortly after birth, allowing for proper separation of pulmonary and systemic blood flow. The common characteristic that blood intended for the body flows from the aorta to the lungs is accurate in the context of PDA. In a normal circulatory system, after birth, the ductus arteriosus should close to prevent this additional flow. However, in PDA, the persistence of this vessel allows for some of the oxygenated blood from the aorta, which is meant to go to the body, to flow back into the pulmonary artery and then into the lungs. This results in increased blood flow to the lungs, which can lead to various complications, including pulmonary overcirculation and heart failure if untreated. Thus, recognizing the role of the ductus arteriosus in both normal and pathological conditions of circulation is vital for understanding the implications of PDA. This knowledge can help medical professionals to appropriately assess and manage patients with this condition.

4. Which organ is primarily responsible for the conduction of air to the lungs?

- A. Bronchi
- B. Trachea**
- C. Esophagus
- D. Larynx

The trachea is the primary organ responsible for conducting air to the lungs. It serves as a crucial passageway that connects the larynx to the bronchi, allowing for the movement of air during respiration. The structure of the trachea, which is reinforced by c-shaped cartilaginous rings, helps maintain its openness and ensure that air can flow efficiently into the lungs even when pressure changes occur during inhalation and exhalation. In addition to serving as a conduit for air, the trachea also plays a role in filtering and humidifying the air before it reaches the lower respiratory tract. It is lined with ciliated epithelial cells that help trap and move mucus and debris out of the airways. While the bronchi also serve as air passageways into the lungs, they branch off from the trachea and are therefore secondary in the conduction of air. The esophagus is involved in the passage of food and liquids to the stomach and does not conduct air, while the larynx, which is primarily associated with sound production and the protection of the trachea against food aspiration, is located above the trachea and acts as an entry point to the trachea rather than facilitating the conduction of air itself.

5. What is the primary function of cranial nerves?

- A. Coordinate movement
- B. Facilitate sensory functions**
- C. Enhance digestion
- D. Regulate blood pressure

The primary function of cranial nerves is to facilitate sensory functions. Cranial nerves are a set of twelve pairs of nerves that directly emerge from the brain and brainstem. They play crucial roles in transmitting sensory information from the peripheral areas of the body to the central nervous system, allowing individuals to experience various sensations, such as sight, sound, taste, and touch. Each cranial nerve has a specific function, and many of them are involved in carrying sensory information. For example, the optic nerve transmits visual information from the retina to the brain, while the olfactory nerve is responsible for the sense of smell. In addition to sensory functions, some cranial nerves also carry motor commands to muscles, particularly those involved in facial expressions and movements. Although some of the other options may seem related to broader physiological functions, such as movement coordination or digestion regulation, they do not capture the primary sensory function directly associated with cranial nerves. Therefore, recognizing the essential role of cranial nerves in sensory perception helps to clarify why facilitating sensory functions is the most accurate answer in this context.

6. Which pH value indicates a neutral solution?

- A. 0
- B. 4
- C. 7**
- D. 14

A pH value of 7 indicates a neutral solution. This understanding is based on the pH scale, which ranges from 0 to 14, with values lower than 7 representing acidity and values higher than 7 representing alkalinity. Pure water, at 25 degrees Celsius, has a pH of 7. This value reflects an equal concentration of hydrogen ions (H^+) and hydroxide ions (OH^-), signifying that the solution is neither acidic nor basic. In this context, a pH below 7 (like 0 or 4) indicates an acidic solution, where there are more hydrogen ions than hydroxide ions. Conversely, a pH above 7 (like 14) indicates a basic (or alkaline) solution, where there are more hydroxide ions than hydrogen ions. Understanding the pH scale and its implications is fundamental in chemistry and is crucial for applications in fields like medicine and biology.

7. Which structure allows air to pass to and from the lungs?

- A. Bronchi
- B. Trachea**
- C. Pharynx
- D. Larynx

The trachea, also known as the windpipe, is the primary structure responsible for allowing air to pass to and from the lungs. It acts as a conduit, connecting the larynx (voice box) above to the bronchi at its lower end. The trachea is lined with cilia and mucus to filter and humidify the air before it reaches the lungs. When we inhale, air travels down the trachea, branching off into the bronchi that lead into each lung, facilitating the process of gas exchange. During exhalation, the process reverses, allowing carbon dioxide-rich air to pass back through the trachea and out of the body. Its rigid structure, made of cartilage rings, supports the airway and prevents collapse, ensuring that air passage remains open and unobstructed. This is crucial for effective respiration, making the trachea a vital part of the respiratory system. The other structures listed, while involved in the overall process of respiration and voice production (like the larynx), do not serve as direct passages for air to and from the lungs in the same way the trachea does.

8. What hormone regulates stress response and is secreted by the adrenal cortex?

- A. Adrenaline
- B. Cortisol**
- C. GnRH
- D. GHRH

Cortisol is the hormone that plays a crucial role in the body's response to stress and is secreted by the adrenal cortex. It is classified as a glucocorticoid, which means it is part of a group of steroid hormones that influence glucose metabolism and the body's ability to respond to stress. When an individual encounters a stressful situation, cortisol is released, leading to several physiological changes designed to help the body manage the stressor. This includes increasing glucose availability for energy, enhancing brain function, and suppressing non-essential functions such as digestion and immune responses during acute stress. Cortisol's role in the stress response is vital for maintaining homeostasis and allowing the body to cope with various stressors. Additionally, its levels can influence a variety of body processes, including metabolism, immune response, and even behavior. In contrast, other hormones listed in the choices play different roles. Adrenaline is associated with the acute stress response and is secreted by the adrenal medulla, not the cortex. GnRH (Gonadotropin-releasing hormone) and GHRH (Growth hormone-releasing hormone) are involved in regulating reproductive and growth-related functions, respectively, and do not play a direct role in the stress response like cortisol.

9. What type of information does the posterior (dorsal) root of the spinal nerve carry?

- A. Motor output**
- B. Neurological reflexes**
- C. Sensory input**
- D. Autonomic functions**

The posterior (dorsal) root of the spinal nerve is responsible for carrying sensory information from the peripheral nervous system to the central nervous system. This pathway is crucial for transmitting signals related to various sensory modalities, including pain, touch, temperature, and proprioception from the body to the spinal cord and then onward to the brain for further processing. The sensory neurons that make up the posterior root have cell bodies located in the dorsal root ganglia. When activated by external stimuli, these neurons carry afferent signals toward the spinal cord, allowing the CNS to interpret and respond to changes in the environment. The other options refer to different nerve functions. Motor output relates to commands sent from the central nervous system to muscles, neurological reflexes involve a direct pathway of signals that do not necessarily include sensory input, and autonomic functions pertain to involuntary processes managed by the autonomic nervous system, which involves separate pathways from those carried by the dorsal roots.

10. What does the term 'gluconeogenesis' refer to?

- A. The synthesis of glycogen from glucose**
- B. The formation of glucose from non-carbohydrate sources**
- C. The breakdown of glucose for energy**
- D. The conversion of glucose into lactate**

The term 'gluconeogenesis' specifically refers to the metabolic process in which glucose is synthesized from non-carbohydrate substrates. This process typically occurs in the liver and, to a lesser extent, in the kidneys. Non-carbohydrate sources can include amino acids, glycerol, and lactate. Gluconeogenesis is particularly important during fasting or intense exercise, when blood glucose levels need to be maintained despite a lack of dietary carbohydrate intake. Since the body cannot directly convert fats into glucose, gluconeogenesis enables it to produce glucose from other substances, ensuring that vital functions, especially those of the brain, which relies on glucose as its primary energy source, can continue uninterrupted. This biochemical pathway is crucial for maintaining blood sugar levels within a normal range when dietary glucose is scarce.

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://pacatentrance.examzify.com>

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