

RESEARCH METHODS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE PRACTICE TEST (SAMPLE)

STUDY GUIDE



SAMPLE STUDY GUIDE WITH LIMITED 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. 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 statement is not a function of a research question?**
 - A. Describing a phenomenon.
 - B. Predicting the outcome of a relationship.
 - C. Exploring topics.
 - D. Framing an open-ended inquiry.

- 2. Differentiate between validity and reliability; give examples of each in social science measurement.**
 - A. Validity refers to consistency; reliability refers to accuracy.
 - B. Validity refers to accuracy (e.g., construct validity); Reliability refers to consistency (e.g., test-retest reliability).
 - C. Validity and reliability are the same.
 - D. A measure can be valid but not reliable.

- 3. What is a sample in research?**
 - A. A subset of the population that is actually studied.
 - B. The entire population.
 - C. A theoretical group.
 - D. A selected research question.

- 4. What does the Excel IF function do?**
 - A. Performs a logical test and returns different values based on the result.
 - B. Calculates the average value of a set of numbers.
 - C. Computes a percentage of a total.
 - D. Counts the number of true values in a range.

- 5. A study that follows a structured, repeatable process to ensure consistent results is described by which term?**
 - A. Systematic Research
 - B. Objective Research
 - C. Management Decision Problem
 - D. Marketing Research Problem

- 6. What are the key differences between cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs?**
- A. Cross-sectional measures change over time; longitudinal measures a single point.
 - B. Longitudinal designs do not require following participants.
 - C. Cross-sectional involves qualitative data only.
 - D. Cross-sectional collects data at one time point; longitudinal collects data over multiple time points to assess change and temporal order.
- 7. What is triangulation in qualitative research, and how does it affect credibility?**
- A. Triangulation is just using more data from a single source.
 - B. Triangulation uses multiple data sources, methods, or investigators to cross-check findings; increases credibility and reduces method bias.
 - C. Triangulation is a statistical test of reliability.
 - D. Triangulation reduces sampling bias by randomization.
- 8. Maintaining an audit trail in a study is most closely associated with which practice?**
- A. Pre-registration.
 - B. De-identification.
 - C. Data encryption.
 - D. Documenting decisions and maintaining an audit trail.
- 9. What differentiates parametric and nonparametric tests?**
- A. Nonparametric tests require distributional parameters.
 - B. Parametric tests require distributional parameters; nonparametric tests do not rely on such assumptions.
 - C. Parametric tests are always more robust to outliers.
 - D. Nonparametric tests assume normal distribution.
- 10. Nonparametric tests are appropriate when data are what?**
- A. All data can be modeled with a linear parameter.
 - B. Perfectly normally distributed interval data.
 - C. Nominal data with large sample sizes.
 - D. Nonparametric tests are used when data do not meet distributional assumptions or are ordinal.

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Which statement is not a function of a research question?

- A. Describing a phenomenon.
- B. Predicting the outcome of a relationship.**
- C. Exploring topics.
- D. Framing an open-ended inquiry.

Research questions guide inquiry by describing a phenomenon, exploring topics, or framing an open-ended direction for study. They are crafted to be answerable with data and to set the path for how you collect and analyze information. Describing a phenomenon fits because you want to understand what is happening and under what conditions. Exploring topics fits because you're using the question to probe less understood areas and generate new insights. Framing an open-ended inquiry fits because the question invites investigation without forcing a specific outcome. Predicting the outcome of a relationship, however, is about forecasting or testing a particular expectation, which belongs to hypotheses and predictive claims rather than the function of a research question itself. The question guides inquiry; predictions typically come from hypotheses built to test theories.

2. Differentiate between validity and reliability; give examples of each in social science measurement.

- A. Validity refers to consistency; reliability refers to accuracy.
- B. Validity refers to accuracy (e.g., construct validity); Reliability refers to consistency (e.g., test-retest reliability).**
- C. Validity and reliability are the same.
- D. A measure can be valid but not reliable.

The main idea here is how we separate whether a measurement is about consistency versus about measuring the right thing. Reliability is about consistency: if you measure the same thing again under the same conditions, you should get similar results. For example, test-retest reliability means giving the same survey to the same people at different times and getting similar scores; inter-rater reliability means different graders assign the same score to the same responses; internal consistency, like Cronbach's alpha, shows that items on a multi-item scale hang together and produce stable results. Validity is about accuracy and relevance: does the instrument actually measure the intended construct? Examples include construct validity, which checks whether the measure relates to other variables as theory would predict; content validity, which ensures the items cover the entire domain of the concept; and criterion validity (including predictive validity), which examines how well the measure correlates with a relevant external outcome. So, the best answer links validity to accuracy of the measurement in representing the intended construct, and links reliability to the consistency of the measurement across time, items, or raters. A measure can be reliably repeatable but not valid if it's consistently measuring something else, whereas a valid measure should also be reliable. The other statements confuse these distinctions or claim they are the same, which doesn't fit how researchers evaluate measurement.

3. What is a sample in research?

A. A subset of the population that is actually studied.

B. The entire population.

C. A theoretical group.

D. A selected research question.

A sample is a subset of the population that is actually studied. In research, you start with a broader group you're interested in—the population—but it's usually not feasible to study everyone. So you select a smaller group, the sample, to collect data. The aim is for the sample to resemble the population in key ways (such as demographics or behaviors) so you can extend what you find to the whole group. The other ideas don't fit as the definition of a sample: the entire population is the full group of interest, not a smaller studied subset; a theoretical group is a concept used in theory rather than an actual set of participants; and a selected research question concerns what you study, not who you study.

4. What does the Excel IF function do?

A. Performs a logical test and returns different values based on the result.

B. Calculates the average value of a set of numbers.

C. Computes a percentage of a total.

D. Counts the number of true values in a range.

This question tests conditional decision-making in a worksheet. The Excel IF function checks a condition (a logical test) and then returns one value if that condition is true and another value if it's false. This branching behavior is what makes IF so versatile: you can drive different outputs based on the data you have. For example, =IF(A1>50, "Pass", "Fail") will yield "Pass" when the value in A1 is greater than 50 and "Fail" otherwise. This is different from averaging numbers, calculating a percentage, or counting items, which are tasks handled by other functions like AVERAGE, arithmetic for percentages, or COUNT/COUNTIF. So the essence is that it performs a logical test and returns different results depending on the outcome.

5. A study that follows a structured, repeatable process to ensure consistent results is described by which term?

A. Systematic Research

B. Objective Research

C. Management Decision Problem

D. Marketing Research Problem

The main concept being tested is using a structured, repeatable process to obtain consistent results. Systematic research is defined by following a predefined protocol: a clear design, specific sampling and data collection methods, and a planned analysis approach. When these steps are documented and followed, the study can be replicated by others and subjected to the same procedures, which strengthens reliability and comparability of findings. This focus on method and replicability is what sets it apart from other terms. Objective research emphasizes impartial measurement and lack of bias, but it doesn't inherently guarantee a repeatable procedure. The Management Decision Problem and the Marketing Research Problem are about defining what needs to be addressed or investigated, not about how the research is conducted in a structured, repeatable way.

6. What are the key differences between cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs?

- A. Cross-sectional measures change over time; longitudinal measures a single point.
- B. Longitudinal designs do not require following participants.
- C. Cross-sectional involves qualitative data only.

D. Cross-sectional collects data at one time point; longitudinal collects data over multiple time points to assess change and temporal order.

The time dimension is what distinguishes these designs: a cross-sectional study collects data at one point in time, giving a snapshot of variables across individuals or groups. A longitudinal study follows the same participants over multiple time points, allowing you to see how variables change and to establish temporal order (which variable changes first or how one evolves over time). This makes longitudinal designs especially useful for studying development, trends, or potential causal sequences, though they can be more demanding and risk attrition. The statement about cross-sectional changing over time and longitudinal being a single point is incorrect because it reverses the actual timing. The idea that longitudinal designs don't require following participants is false because following the same individuals over time is essential to that design. Finally, the claim that cross-sectional involves qualitative data only is not accurate since cross-sectional studies can use either qualitative or quantitative methods.

7. What is triangulation in qualitative research, and how does it affect credibility?

- A. Triangulation is just using more data from a single source.
- B. Triangulation uses multiple data sources, methods, or investigators to cross-check findings; increases credibility and reduces method bias.**
- C. Triangulation is a statistical test of reliability.
- D. Triangulation reduces sampling bias by randomization.

Triangulation in qualitative research means using multiple angles to verify findings: drawing on different data sources, applying different data collection methods, or involving more than one researcher to interpret the data. The goal is to see whether the same patterns hold across these diverse approaches. When findings converge across data sources and methods, confidence in the results grows, and method bias is reduced because a single bias would have to align with several perspectives to produce the same conclusion. It also helps reveal any divergences that prompt deeper understanding rather than a single, unchecked narrative. Using more data from a single source doesn't test across different viewpoints, so it doesn't achieve triangulation. It isn't a statistical test of reliability, which is a quantitative concept. And randomization to reduce sampling bias is a technique tied to quantitative sampling, not triangulation in qualitative work.

8. Maintaining an audit trail in a study is most closely associated with which practice?

- A. Pre-registration.
- B. De-identification.
- C. Data encryption.

D. Documenting decisions and maintaining an audit trail.

An audit trail is a documented history of all decisions, actions, and data changes in a study, with timestamps and who performed each action. This creates transparency, accountability, and a record that supports reproducibility and integrity in research. The practice that best matches this concept is documenting decisions and maintaining an audit trail, because it directly produces that traceable log of what was done, why, and by whom.

Pre-registration focuses on stating hypotheses and planned analyses before data collection to reduce bias, but it doesn't by itself capture the ongoing decisions and actions taken during the study. De-identification aims to protect participant privacy by removing identifiable information, and data encryption protects data security; neither inherently provides the comprehensive log of decisions and changes that an audit trail emphasizes.

9. What differentiates parametric and nonparametric tests?

- A. Nonparametric tests require distributional parameters.
- B. Parametric tests require distributional parameters; nonparametric tests do not rely on such assumptions.**
- C. Parametric tests are always more robust to outliers.
- D. Nonparametric tests assume normal distribution.

The key idea is how tests handle distribution assumptions and what information about the distribution they use. Parametric tests rely on a specific distribution form (often normal) and depend on distributional parameters like the mean and standard deviation to compute their test statistics. Nonparametric tests, on the other hand, do not assume a particular distribution and do not depend on those parameters; many use the data's ranks instead of raw values, making fewer assumptions about the distribution. That's why the statement that parametric tests require distributional parameters while nonparametric tests do not rely on such assumptions is the best answer. It captures the fundamental distinction between the two approaches. Why the other ideas don't fit: the notion that nonparametric tests require distributional parameters is incorrect because they are designed to avoid such requirements. The idea that parametric tests are always more robust to outliers isn't reliable—outliers can heavily distort parametric tests, whereas nonparametric ones often cope better with them. And the claim that nonparametric tests assume normal distribution is false; their appeal is precisely that they do not rely on that assumption.

10. Nonparametric tests are appropriate when data are what?

- A. All data can be modeled with a linear parameter.
- B. Perfectly normally distributed interval data.
- C. Nominal data with large sample sizes.
- D. Nonparametric tests are used when data do not meet distributional assumptions or are ordinal.**

Nonparametric tests are used when you can't rely on a specific population distribution or when the data are on an ordinal scale rather than an interval/ratio scale. These methods don't depend on assumptions like normality or equal variances, so they're appropriate when those distributional assumptions are violated or when the data are naturally ordered but not truly interval. If the data are perfectly normally distributed and measured on an interval scale, parametric tests are typically more powerful, so nonparametric methods aren't needed. While nonparametric approaches can be applied to nominal data in some situations, the main reason to use them is the absence of distributional assumptions or the ordinal nature of the data, not merely the data type or sample size.

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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://researchmethodssocscience.examzify.com>

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

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