

SQA National 5 Psychology Practice Exam (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

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1. How does intrinsic motivation typically affect a person's persistence in activities?

- A. It decreases persistence**
- B. It has no effect on persistence**
- C. It generally increases persistence**
- D. It only affects social activities**

2. What is the role of the prefrontal cortex?

- A. It controls basic survival functions like breathing and heart rate**
- B. It is involved in higher-order functions like decision-making and impulse control**
- C. It regulates emotional responses and social behavior**
- D. It primarily processes sensory information**

3. What does social learning theory emphasize in behavior acquisition?

- A. Genetic predispositions**
- B. Observational learning and imitation**
- C. Internal cognitive processes**
- D. Neurological functions**

4. What characterizes collectivist cultures?

- A. Emphasis on individual goals and independence**
- B. Prioritizing group harmony and relationships**
- C. Focus on personal achievement over community needs**
- D. Advocating for self-reliance and autonomy**

5. What is a significant ethical issue in psychological research?

- A. Observing natural behaviors without consent**
- B. Informed consent regarding participation and risks**
- C. Conducting experiments in a controlled environment**
- D. Using deception in all research scenarios**

6. What is a strength of systematic desensitisation?

- A. The inability to measure progress**
- B. The use of a flexible hierarchy system**
- C. Immediate elimination of phobia symptoms**
- D. Complete avoidance of the feared object or situation**

7. Which type of study primarily focuses on an individual or small group for detailed information?

- A. Experimental study**
- B. Survey study**
- C. Case study**
- D. Longitudinal study**

8. What role does the humanistic approach emphasize in psychology?

- A. Statistical analysis in behavior**
- B. Environmental factors in behavior**
- C. Personal growth and self-actualization**
- D. Biological influences in decision-making**

9. What are defense mechanisms according to psychoanalytic theory?

- A. Strategies used for effective communication**
- B. Unconscious methods to protect oneself from anxiety**
- C. Conscious thought processes that help solve problems**
- D. Behavioral changes in response to environmental stimuli**

10. What is one way to encourage intrinsic motivation in students?

- A. Offering extensive rewards for success**
- B. Providing opportunities for choice and autonomy**
- C. Implementing strict deadlines**
- D. Encouraging competition among peers**

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. How does intrinsic motivation typically affect a person's persistence in activities?

- A. It decreases persistence**
- B. It has no effect on persistence**
- C. It generally increases persistence**
- D. It only affects social activities**

Intrinsic motivation generally increases a person's persistence in activities because when individuals engage in an activity for the inherent satisfaction and enjoyment it provides, they are more likely to remain committed and continue working through challenges. This motivation stems from internal factors such as personal interest, curiosity, or a sense of accomplishment, which can fuel a desire to overcome obstacles and persist in completing tasks. The enjoyment derived from the activity itself makes individuals more resilient and willing to invest time and effort, even when faced with difficulties. In contrast, options that suggest a decrease in persistence or no effect overlook the fundamental nature of intrinsic motivation. The focus on social activities specifically in one of the choices does not encompass the broader applicability of intrinsic motivation, which can influence a variety of tasks, whether they are social, educational, or personal in nature. Overall, intrinsic motivation is a powerful driver that enhances engagement and perseverance in the pursuit of one's goals.

2. What is the role of the prefrontal cortex?

- A. It controls basic survival functions like breathing and heart rate**
- B. It is involved in higher-order functions like decision-making and impulse control**
- C. It regulates emotional responses and social behavior**
- D. It primarily processes sensory information**

The prefrontal cortex plays a crucial role in higher-order cognitive functions, which include decision-making, problem-solving, impulse control, and planning. This area of the brain is key to evaluating complex situations, weighing potential outcomes, and making informed choices. It allows individuals to manage their actions and inhibit inappropriate behaviors, which is essential for social functioning and overall mental health. In addition to aiding in decision-making, the prefrontal cortex is also involved in executive functions, which encompass a range of skills necessary for goal-oriented behavior. This includes cognitive flexibility, the ability to switch between tasks or perspectives, and working memory, which helps in holding and manipulating information temporarily. Understanding the prefrontal cortex's role in these sophisticated functions highlights its importance in governing our everyday actions and long-term planning, distinguishing it from brain areas responsible for more basic or immediate survival functions, emotional responses, or sensory processing.

3. What does social learning theory emphasize in behavior acquisition?

- A. Genetic predispositions
- B. Observational learning and imitation**
- C. Internal cognitive processes
- D. Neurological functions

Social learning theory emphasizes the role of observational learning and imitation in the acquisition of behavior. Developed by Albert Bandura, this theory posits that individuals can learn new behaviors by watching others perform those behaviors, rather than only through direct experience. Key components of social learning theory include modeling, where a person observes the actions of a model (such as a parent, peer, or media figure), and the subsequent imitation of those actions. Through features like attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, social learning theory explains how social influences can shape behavior. For instance, a child might learn to tie their shoes by watching a parent do it, practicing the technique themselves, and then successfully doing it. The emphasis on imitation highlights that behaviors can be acquired simply by observing the experiences and actions of others, rather than solely through reinforcement and repetition. This focus on observational learning distinguishes social learning theory from other theories that might center on biological or cognitive elements as primary influences on behavior.

4. What characterizes collectivist cultures?

- A. Emphasis on individual goals and independence
- B. Prioritizing group harmony and relationships**
- C. Focus on personal achievement over community needs
- D. Advocating for self-reliance and autonomy

Collectivist cultures are characterized by a strong emphasis on group harmony and relationships. In such cultures, the well-being of the group is prioritized over individual desires. This means that people are more likely to work collaboratively, support each other, and consider the impacts of their actions on family, community, or societal relationships. Cultural practices, social structures, and value systems in collectivist societies often reinforce interconnectedness, cooperation, and loyalty towards the group. In contrast, the other options focus on individualism, which is not representative of collectivist cultures. For instance, emphasizing individual goals, personal achievement, self-reliance, and autonomy points to a more individualistic approach, which values independence and personal success over communal ties.

5. What is a significant ethical issue in psychological research?

- A. Observing natural behaviors without consent
- B. Informed consent regarding participation and risks**
- C. Conducting experiments in a controlled environment
- D. Using deception in all research scenarios

In psychological research, informed consent is a fundamental ethical principle. It refers to the requirement that participants are fully informed about the nature of the study, including its purpose, what their involvement entails, any potential risks, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. This ethical consideration ensures that individuals can make an educated decision on whether to participate, protecting their autonomy and well-being. When researchers prioritize informed consent, they respect the participants' rights and contribute to the integrity of the research process. By ensuring that participants understand what to expect and can consent without coercion, researchers uphold not only ethical standards but also enhance the validity of their findings by ensuring that participants are engaged willingly. Other issues related to ethics in psychological research, such as observing natural behaviors without consent or the use of deception, may arise but do not have the same foundational importance as informed consent. While conducting experiments in controlled environments is a methodological choice, it is not inherently about ethical considerations. Thus, the emphasis on informed consent is critical for maintaining ethical standards in research practice.

6. What is a strength of systematic desensitisation?

- A. The inability to measure progress
- B. The use of a flexible hierarchy system**
- C. Immediate elimination of phobia symptoms
- D. Complete avoidance of the feared object or situation

Systematic desensitisation is a behavioral therapy technique often used to help individuals overcome phobias and anxiety disorders. A key strength of this approach lies in the use of a flexible hierarchy system. The flexible hierarchy allows the therapist and client to collaboratively create a list of anxiety-provoking stimuli related to the phobia, arranged from least to most anxiety-inducing. This tailoring of the hierarchy means that the exposure to fear-inducing situations can be personalized to the individual's specific fears and coping abilities, promoting a tailored therapeutic experience. The gradual approach helps the client to build confidence and skills in facing their fears progressively, making the process more manageable and effective. This strength contrasts with the other choices, where measuring progress may be difficult, phobia symptoms are not immediately eliminated, and complete avoidance of feared situations contradicts the purpose of systematic desensitisation, which aims to reduce fear through gradual exposure rather than avoidance.

7. Which type of study primarily focuses on an individual or small group for detailed information?

- A. Experimental study**
- B. Survey study**
- C. Case study**
- D. Longitudinal study**

The correct choice focuses on a case study, which is a research method that provides an in-depth, detailed understanding of a specific individual or small group. This approach allows researchers to explore complex issues, behaviors, or experiences more thoroughly than other methods. Case studies often involve various data collection techniques, such as interviews, observations, and analyses of historical documents, to gather rich qualitative data. This method is particularly effective in psychology for understanding unique psychological phenomena, developing theories, or generating hypotheses, as it captures the nuances of human behavior and experiences that larger-scale studies may overlook. Because it focuses on depth rather than breadth, a case study offers comprehensive insights that broader studies might miss. In contrast, experimental studies typically involve manipulating variables to identify cause-and-effect relationships, survey studies gather data from larger groups to measure attitudes or opinions, and longitudinal studies track the same subjects over time to observe changes and developments. Each of these approaches has its own strengths, but for obtaining detailed information about a specific individual or a small group, the case study is the most suitable choice.

8. What role does the humanistic approach emphasize in psychology?

- A. Statistical analysis in behavior**
- B. Environmental factors in behavior**
- C. Personal growth and self-actualization**
- D. Biological influences in decision-making**

The humanistic approach in psychology emphasizes personal growth and self-actualization as central concepts. This approach focuses on the individual's subjective experience and inherently believes in the positive potential of human beings. It holds that through personal development and self-exploration, individuals can achieve their full potential, leading to a fulfilling and meaningful life. This perspective contrasts sharply with approaches that lean heavily on external factors or biological influences. For instance, while statistical analysis and environmental factors may play significant roles in understanding behavior, the humanistic approach prioritizes the individual's capacity for self-awareness, making choices, and taking responsibility for one's life. Additionally, biological influences, while foundational in other theories such as behaviorism or biological psychology, are not the main focus of the humanistic approach, which seeks to empower individuals rather than explain behavior solely through genetic or physiological mechanisms. Thus, personal growth and self-actualization are pivotal in understanding the humanistic perspective in psychology.

9. What are defense mechanisms according to psychoanalytic theory?

- A. Strategies used for effective communication**
- B. Unconscious methods to protect oneself from anxiety**
- C. Conscious thought processes that help solve problems**
- D. Behavioral changes in response to environmental stimuli**

Defense mechanisms, as described in psychoanalytic theory, are unconscious strategies employed by individuals to protect themselves from anxiety and emotional distress. These mechanisms allow individuals to cope with internal conflicts, emotional pain, or feelings of inadequacy that arise from the conscious mind or from external pressures. For instance, someone may use denial to refuse to accept a distressing reality or repression to push uncomfortable thoughts out of conscious awareness. By operating at an unconscious level, defense mechanisms help to maintain psychological equilibrium and prevent overwhelming feelings that could disrupt one's mental state. The other options do not accurately reflect the nature of defense mechanisms. Effective communication strategies pertain to interpersonal skills and do not align with the unconscious processes defined in psychoanalysis. Conscious thought processes aimed at problem-solving are related to rational thinking and cognitive functions, contrasting with the involuntary nature of defense mechanisms. Behavioral changes in response to environmental stimuli involve external responses rather than internal psychological defenses, making them a different aspect of psychological functioning.

10. What is one way to encourage intrinsic motivation in students?

- A. Offering extensive rewards for success**
- B. Providing opportunities for choice and autonomy**
- C. Implementing strict deadlines**
- D. Encouraging competition among peers**

Encouraging intrinsic motivation in students can be effectively achieved by providing opportunities for choice and autonomy. When students are given the ability to make choices about their learning—whether it's selecting topics that interest them or deciding how to approach a project—they become more engaged and invested in the process. This sense of control fosters a deeper connection to the material, promoting a love of learning for its own sake rather than for external rewards or pressures. In contrast, offering extensive rewards for success tends to promote extrinsic motivation, where students focus on the reward rather than the joy of learning. Strict deadlines can create a sense of stress or pressure that might hinder intrinsic motivation, as students may rush to complete tasks rather than take the time to engage deeply with the content. Encouraging competition among peers can lead to a focus on outperforming others, which often detracts from personal growth and enjoyment in learning. Instead, by emphasizing choice and autonomy, students can cultivate a more meaningful and self-driven approach to their education.

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://sqanational5psychology.examzify.com>

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

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