COMPREHENSIVE PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY – SPEECH SOUNDS, ARTICULATORY FEATURES, AND DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES 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.

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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!

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Questions

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1. Name two English vowels that are typically tense.

A. / / and /æ/

B. /i / and /u /

C. / / and / /

D. /e / and /o /

2. What is vowel backness?

A. The vertical tongue position

B. The horizontal tongue position, categorized as front, central, or back

C. The lip rounding

D. The duration of the vowel

3. Which word in the sample demonstrates final-position substitution, such as replacing a final velar with an alveolar?

A. tree

B. coat

C. duck

D. can

4. Consider this group of sounds: [, , ,]. They share the same place of articulation which is ...

A. strident

B. affricate

C. uvular

D. post-alveolar

5. Which symbol is commonly used to indicate lexical stress on a syllable?

A.

B.

C.

D.

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6. In the given repertoire, which symbol represents an alveolar nasal?

A. m

B. n

C. β

D. f

7. What does a positive Voice Onset Time (VOT) indicate for a stop consonant?

A. Voicing begins before release

B. Voicing begins after release

C. Voicing begins at the same time as release

D. Voicing is not involved

8. A common way of describing children's first word productions is to list the phones and phonotactic structures in the child's productive repertoire. What is the advantage of this method of analysis at this stage of speech and language development?

A. The child's productions are described independent of the adult model and underlying representation.

B. The results give a sense of the proximity of the child's production attempt to the adult model.

C. The correctness of the child's phones as spoken can be related to the adult models.

D. The analysis permits calculation of the total proportion of words produced correctly.

9. Consider this group of sounds: [w, j, , l]. They share the same manner of articulation, they are ...

A. approximants

B. alveolars

C. glides

D. affricates

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10. Which of the following factors should result in prioritization of a child for treatment upon diagnosis of SSD?

A. Younger age of child, that is 2 or 3 years of age

B. Concomitant language impairment

C. Male sex

D. Older age of child, that is older than age 9 years

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Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Name two English vowels that are typically tense.

A. / / and /æ/

B. /i / and /u /

C. / / and / /

D. /e / and /o /

Tenseness of vowels in English refers to vowels produced with greater muscular tension and typically longer duration. The two vowels that are classically described as tense are the long high vowels /i / and /u / (as in beat and boot). These vowels are held longer and require more tongue and jaw tension than their lax counterparts, which is why they're grouped as tense. The other options involve vowels that are either lax (short and less tense), like / / and /æ/, or central vowels / / and / / that aren't characterized as tense in this framework. The pair /e / and /o / are diphthongs, which are glide vowels formed by movement from one position to another; they aren't typically labeled as the simple tense category in basic vowel-height/tour distinctions. So, the best answer is the long versions /i / and /u /.

2. What is vowel backness?

A. The vertical tongue position

B. The horizontal tongue position, categorized as front, central, or back

C. The lip rounding

D. The duration of the vowel

Vowel backness is about where the tongue sits in the mouth along the front–back axis when producing a vowel. It describes whether the tongue body is toward the front, the center, or the back, and vowels are categorized as front, central, or back accordingly. This dimension is separate from how high or low the tongue is (height) and from lip rounding. For example, the high front vowel [i] is toward the front, the mid central vowel [ ] sits in the center, and the high back vowel [u] is toward the back. So backness is defined by the horizontal tongue position, categorized as front, central, or back.

3. Which word in the sample demonstrates final-position substitution, such as replacing a final velar with an alveolar?

A. tree

B. coat

C. duck

D. can

Final-position substitution is when the last consonant in a word is replaced by a different consonant, often replacing a velar at the end with an alveolar. The word duck ends with a velar stop /k/. In many children's speech, final velars tend to be replaced by alveolars like /t/ or /d/, so duck can be pronounced as something like /d t/ (sound-wise, "duct"). That shows the pattern clearly: a velar at the end being substituted by an alveolar. The other words don't illustrate this because they either end with a non-velar sound (tree ends in a vowel, coat ends with an alveolar /t/, can ends with an alveolar /n/), so there isn't a final velar that could be substituted.

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4. Consider this group of sounds: [, , ,]. They share the same place of articulation which is ...

A. strident

B. affricate

C. uvular

D. post-alveolar

These sounds are all produced with the tongue constriction located just behind the alveolar ridge, in the post-alveolar region. Whether the sound is a fricative (the continuous turbulent noise for [ ] and [ ]) or an affricate (a brief stop closure released into friction for [ ] and [ ]), the place of articulation is the same: the post-alveolar area. Some terminology also calls this area palato-alveolar, but in any case it is the region just behind the alveolar ridge, not the more back uvular area. The other options describe either a manner of articulation (affricate) or a distinctive acoustic quality (strident), not where the sound is formed.

5. Which symbol is commonly used to indicate lexical stress on a syllable?

A.

B.

C.

D.

In phonetic transcription, the main emphasis on a syllable—its primary lexical stress—is shown with the symbol placed before the stressed syllable. This mark signals the strongest beat in the word and often accompanies changes in pronunciation such as longer vowels or higher pitch on that syllable. The secondary stress uses , a lighter emphasis on another syllable, but it isn't the mark for the main stress. The symbols and relate to vowel length, not stress, so they don't indicate which syllable carries the primary emphasis. Therefore, the symbol that indicates lexical stress on a syllable is the mark.

6. In the given repertoire, which symbol represents an alveolar nasal?

A. m

B. n

C. β

D. f

An alveolar nasal is produced with the tongue tip (or blade) at the alveolar ridge right behind the upper teeth, while the velum is lowered so air resonates through the nasal cavity and the vocal cords vibrate. The symbol n in IPA stands for this sound, as heard in English words like "no" or "nap." The other symbols here represent different places or manners: m is a nasal made with both lips (bilabial), β is a voiced bilabial fricative, and f is a voiceless labiodental fricative. So the symbol for the alveolar nasal is n.

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7. What does a positive Voice Onset Time (VOT) indicate for a stop consonant?

A. Voicing begins before release

B. Voicing begins after release

C. Voicing begins at the same time as release

D. Voicing is not involved

Voice Onset Time measures the interval from when a stop release happens to when the vocal folds start vibrating. A positive VOT means the voicing begins after the release—the order is release first, then vocal fold vibration. This pattern shows the stop is produced without voicing during the closure and a short lag before voicing starts, which is typical for voiceless stops. In contrast, if voicing started before or at release (negative or near-zero VOT), that would be characteristic of a voiced stop. For example, English voiceless stops like the initial p often have a noticeable lag before voicing begins, producing a positive VOT, whereas voiced stops like b typically begin voicing earlier, yielding a smaller or negative VOT.

8. A common way of describing children's first word productions is to list the phones and phonotactic structures in the child's productive repertoire. What is the advantage of this method of analysis at this stage of speech and language development?

A. The child's productions are described independent of the adult model and underlying representation.

B. The results give a sense of the proximity of the child's production attempt to the adult model.

C. The correctness of the child's phones as spoken can be related to the adult models.

D. The analysis permits calculation of the total proportion of words produced correctly.

In early word production, the most informative approach is to describe what the child actually says in terms of the phones they can produce and the phonotactic patterns they use. This focuses on the child's own productive system rather than how closely those productions match adult speech or target words. By cataloging the child's phonemes and allowable sound sequences, you get a real picture of the child's phonological inventory and the constraints shaping their speech at this stage. It shows what patterns the child can reliably produce, how their production system is developing, and what needs to be supported next, without presupposing adult categories or ideal pronunciations. This makes sense here because early word learning is about discovering and refining the child's own articulatory abilities rather than measuring accuracy to adult models. While other approaches might emphasize proximity to adult speech or correctness against adult words, those goals aren't as meaningful when the child's system is still emerging and diverging from adult norms.

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9. Consider this group of sounds: [w, j, , l]. They share the same manner of articulation, they are ...

A. approximants

B. alveolars

C. glides

D. affricates

These sounds share a manner of articulation called approximants. An approximant constricts the vocal tract only loosely, allowing the airstream to flow with little turbulence, so the sound is voiced and sonorous rather than a noisy or abrupt stop. That property fits all four: w, j, , and l are produced with open or near-open constrictions rather than a strong friction or a burst of air. Within approximants, w and j are often described as glides because they behave like vowels in how the tongue moves toward a vowel, while l and are liquids, produced with a more fixed constriction that still doesn't create turbulent airflow. The key point is the shared manner of articulation across the group, not the exact place of articulation or the finer subclassifications.

10. Which of the following factors should result in prioritization of a child for treatment upon diagnosis of SSD?

A. Younger age of child, that is 2 or 3 years of age

B. Concomitant language impairment

C. Male sex

D. Older age of child, that is older than age 9 years

Concomitant language impairment signals a broader communication profile beyond just speech sounds. When a child has SSD along with language impairment, the risk that speech difficulties will persist into later childhood—and that language and literacy will be affected—is much higher. This combination means the child is likely to experience cascading challenges in vocabulary, grammar, and narrative skills, which can in turn impact reading and academic success. Prioritizing intervention in such cases helps address both systems simultaneously, aiming to improve overall communicative competence and reduce long-term impacts. You might consider age-related factors, but early intervention is beneficial for many children with SSD. However, the presence of a language impairment is the strongest indicator that treatment should be prioritized because it directly relates to broader language development and literacy risk. Sex or older age alone do not carry the same predictive power for prioritization in this context.

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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:

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

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