OCR A-LEVEL PHILOSOPHY PRACTICE EXAM (SAMPLE)

STUDY GUIDE



SAMPLE STUDY GUIDE WITH LIMITED QUESTIONS

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Table of Contents

Copyright 1
Table of Contents 2
Introduction 3
How to Use This Guide 4
Questions 5
Answers 8
Explanations 10
Next Steps 16

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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. **Which philosopher's view of human beings equates them to "bytes of digital information"?**

   A. Gilbert Ryle

   B. Bertrand Russell

   C. Richard Dawkins

   D. Jean-Paul Sartre

2. **Which classical philosopher's view is central to the teleological argument regarding design?**

   A. Socrates

   B. Aristotle

   C. Plato

   D. Kant

3. **According to Aristotle, all living things have a soul with varying capacities. What capacity do humans possess?**

   A. Capacity for nutrition

   B. Capacity for ethics and intellect

   C. Capacity for desire and emotion

   D. Capacity for physical movement

4. **What is one strength of the via negativa approach to religious language?**

   A. It simplifies the description of God

   B. It allows for anthropomorphic understanding of God

   C. It respects the ineffable nature of God

   D. It encourages a literal understanding of God

5. **According to Anthony Flew, what often disqualifies religious statements?**

   A. The lack of scholarly interpretation

   B. The presence of constant qualifications

   C. The belief in empiricism and logic

   D. The absence of community support

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6. What flaw does Mill identify in the universe that suggests a flawed creator?

A. Beauty

B. Complexity

C. Morality

D. Harm

7. Which philosopher is known for the idea of the evil demon causing doubt about existence?

A. Plato

B. Aristotle

C. René Descartes

D. David Hume

8. How does Dummett's view of omniscience face criticism?

A. It considers too many perspectives

B. It ignores practical knowledge

C. It overemphasizes theoretical concepts

D. It simplifies divine knowledge

9. What does the "discourse of faith" refer to?

A. A language criticized by logical positivists

B. A sentence that can be proven true or false

C. A language with specific meaning in a religion

D. A scientific approach to philosophy

10. What is meant by 'cognitive sentences' in religious language?

A. They cannot be described as true or false

B. They convey personal beliefs without reference

C. They can be accurately described as true or false

D. They rely on figurative language

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Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. Which philosopher's view of human beings equates them to "bytes of digital information"?

A. Gilbert Ryle

B. Bertrand Russell

C. Richard Dawkins

D. Jean-Paul Sartre

The philosopher whose view of human beings equates them to "bytes of digital information" is indeed Richard Dawkins. Dawkins is best known for his work in evolutionary biology and for popularizing the concept of the "selfish gene," which emphasizes the role of genes as units of natural selection. In this context, his portrayal of organisms can be understood as vehicles for genes, similar to how digital information (or bytes) functions in computational frameworks. Dawkins argues that genes carry information and that this information can be transmitted, altered, and replicated, much like digital data in the realm of technology. This analogy suggests that, at a fundamental level, human beings can be seen as composed of information encoded in their DNA, reflecting both biological and digital perspectives. This comparison emphasizes the informational aspect of existence, allowing for discussions regarding genetics, evolution, and even the potential for artificial intelligence and consciousness. Understanding this framework allows for a deeper engagement with contemporary discussions about the nature of life, consciousness, and the impact of information technology on our understanding of human existence.

2. Which classical philosopher's view is central to the teleological argument regarding design?

A. Socrates

B. Aristotle

C. Plato

D. Kant

The teleological argument, also known as the argument from design, asserts that the order and complexity in the universe indicate a purposeful creator. Aristotle's philosophy is central to this argument due to his concept of "final causes," which posits that everything in nature has a purpose or end goal it aims to achieve. This idea directly contributes to understanding the natural order and suggests that the existence of complex, purposeful arrangements in nature points towards an intelligent designer. Aristotle's work emphasizes the importance of observing the natural world and discerning the purposes behind natural phenomena. His idea of the "Unmoved Mover" further supports the teleological argument by suggesting that there is a primary cause or source that initiates all movement and change in the universe, ultimately leading to its organized and purposeful state. While other philosophers like Plato and Kant made significant contributions to metaphysics and ethics, they do not specifically focus on the teleological argument in the same way that Aristotle does. Plato's focus on ideals and forms and Kant's critical philosophy operate in different domains that do not center on the design argument as effectively as Aristotle's framework does.

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3. According to Aristotle, all living things have a soul with varying capacities. What capacity do humans possess?

A. Capacity for nutrition

B. Capacity for ethics and intellect

C. Capacity for desire and emotion

D. Capacity for physical movement

According to Aristotle's philosophy, the concept of the soul (or "psyche") is fundamental to understanding living beings. Aristotle categorizes souls into three types based on their capacities: the vegetative soul, which enables nutrition and growth; the sensitive soul, which allows for sensation and movement; and the rational soul, which is unique to humans. Humans possess the capacity for ethics and intellect, as they have the ability to reason, think abstractly, and make ethical judgments. This rational aspect of the soul distinguishes humans from other living beings, as it entails moral reasoning and the pursuit of knowledge. Unlike the vegetative and sensitive souls that allow for basic life functions and emotions respectively, the rational soul encompasses the ability to engage in complex reasoning and to reflect on ethical matters. This understanding of human capacity aligns with Aristotle's view that the ultimate purpose of human life involves the exercise of reason and ethical contemplation, leading to the development of virtue and a fulfilling life. Thus, recognizing the capacity for ethics and intellect as the defining feature of the human soul provides insight into Aristotle's broader views on human nature and the moral life.

4. What is one strength of the via negativa approach to religious language?

A. It simplifies the description of God

B. It allows for anthropomorphic understanding of God

C. It respects the ineffable nature of God

D. It encourages a literal understanding of God

One strength of the via negativa approach to religious language is that it respects the ineffable nature of God. This approach posits that God transcends human comprehension and language, making it more appropriate to describe God in terms of what can be said He is not, rather than what can be positively asserted about His nature. By emphasizing negations, such as stating that God is not limited, not imperfect, or not contingent, the via negativa acknowledges that any positive description may fall short of capturing the divine essence. This is significant because it encourages believers to maintain a sense of humility regarding their understanding of God, recognizing that the divine reality is ultimately beyond human articulation and experience. This method fosters a deeper reverence and mystery surrounding the divine, aligning with many theological traditions that emphasize God's transcendence.

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5. According to Anthony Flew, what often disqualifies religious statements?

A. The lack of scholarly interpretation

B. The presence of constant qualifications

C. The belief in empiricism and logic

D. The absence of community support

The correct answer highlights the core idea presented by Anthony Flew in his critique of religious language. Flew argued that religious statements often come with qualifications that dilute their meaning and testability. When believers respond to challenges about their claims by introducing various qualifications—essentially hedging their bets—they make it difficult to falsify or even test those claims. For example, if someone claims that "God is love," and then adds qualifications that limit this assertion based on personal experience or context, the statement becomes less about an objective assertion and more about subjective interpretation, thereby losing its philosophical weight. Flew's concern was that for a statement to be meaningful, it must be vulnerable to being proven false; otherwise, it lacks substantive content. If every religious statement can be qualified in such a way that it evades critique or refutation, then it does not stand as a robust claim about reality. Thus, the presence of constant qualifications undermines the ability of religious statements to make clear, testable claims, effectively disqualifying them in the realm of meaningful discussion about empirical reality.

6. What flaw does Mill identify in the universe that suggests a flawed creator?

A. Beauty

B. Complexity

C. Morality

D. Harm

Mill identifies the presence of harm and suffering in the world as evidence suggesting a flawed creator. In his utilitarian framework, he examines the implications of a universe containing significant suffering, which seems inconsistent with the notion of an all-powerful, all-good deity. The existence of widespread harm leads to the conclusion that if a perfect creator existed, one would expect a world governed by overall happiness and minimal suffering. The persistent presence of harm suggests that either the creator is not benevolent, is incapable of preventing suffering, or perhaps does not exist at all. This argument raises substantial questions about the nature of divine attributes and challenges traditional views about the nature of God in light of human experience, particularly concerning ethics and the capacity for moral knowledge.

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7. Which philosopher is known for the idea of the evil demon causing doubt about existence?

A. Plato

B. Aristotle

C. René Descartes

D. David Hume

René Descartes is the philosopher associated with the concept of the evil demon, which he introduced in his meditations on doubt and certainty. In his work, Descartes famously explores the idea that an all-powerful, deceptive being could manipulate our senses and perceptions, leading us to question the reality of the world around us. This thought experiment serves as a foundational element in his quest for indubitable knowledge, wherein he seeks to establish what can be known for certain despite potential deception. Through this method of radical doubt, Descartes ultimately finds that while he can doubt the existence of the external world and even his own body, the very act of doubting confirms his existence as a thinking being, encapsulated in the phrase "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am). This pivotal realization marks a significant moment in philosophical thought, emphasizing the importance of skepticism in the pursuit of knowledge and the nature of existence. The other philosophers listed have distinct contributions to philosophy, but they do not focus on the specific concept of an evil demon as a source of doubt in existence. Plato's idealism deals with the nature of forms and reality, Aristotle is known for his empirical approach to knowledge and categorization of the physical world

8. How does Dummett's view of omniscience face criticism?

A. It considers too many perspectives

B. It ignores practical knowledge

C. It overemphasizes theoretical concepts

D. It simplifies divine knowledge

Dummett's view of omniscience faces criticism for ignoring practical knowledge, which highlights the distinction between theoretical understanding and practical application in knowledge. In the context of omniscience, practical knowledge refers to the understanding of how knowledge is used in real-life situations and the ways in which this knowledge is embodied and enacted in the world. Critics argue that by focusing primarily on theoretical aspects, Dummett's approach fails to account for the lived experiences and actions that shape our understanding of knowledge and its implications. This criticism emphasizes that omniscience should not only be about knowing all truths in a theoretical sense but also involve the ability to apply that knowledge in a practical context. The relevance of practical knowledge is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of omniscience, as it encompasses the subtleties and complexities of human experience and understanding that cannot be reduced to mere theoretical constructs. This perspective raises important questions about the nature of divine knowledge and its relationship to human understanding.

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9. What does the "discourse of faith" refer to?

A. A language criticized by logical positivists

B. A sentence that can be proven true or false

C. A language with specific meaning in a religion

D. A scientific approach to philosophy

The term "discourse of faith" specifically refers to the language and terminology used within religious contexts, which carry particular meanings and significance for those who adhere to that faith. It encompasses the beliefs, rituals, and spiritual concepts that are articulated in a religious framework. This kind of discourse is shaped by the traditions, texts, and doctrines of the religion, and it serves to convey not only the beliefs of the faith but also the communal identity of its followers. In contrast, the other options present different concepts that do not align with the essence of the "discourse of faith." The critique from logical positivists relates to a philosophical stance on the meaningfulness of language rather than a religious context. The notion of a sentence being provable as true or false pertains to empiricism and logic, which stands apart from the inherently subjective and experiential nature of faith. Lastly, describing a scientific approach to philosophy does not capture the distinctive characteristics of faith-based language, which often deals with metaphysical and existential questions rather than empirical verification.

10. What is meant by 'cognitive sentences' in religious language?

A. They cannot be described as true or false

B. They convey personal beliefs without reference

C. They can be accurately described as true or false

D. They rely on figurative language

Cognitive sentences in religious language refer to statements that can be evaluated for truth or falsehood. This means that these sentences make claims about the world or about reality that can be assessed against evidence or reason. For example, a cognitive sentence might be something like "God exists," which suggests a proposition that one can argue for or against based on philosophical reasoning or theological inquiry. In the context of religious language, cognitive sentences play a vital role because they allow believers and philosophers to engage with the content of their faith in a way that can be analyzed, debated, and understood. The ability to determine whether a cognitive statement is true or false is what distinguishes it from non-cognitive statements, which express emotions or opinions but do not have truth value. Thus, cognitive sentences are foundational in discussions about the nature of belief, justification, and the meaning of religious claims.

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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://ocralevelphilosophy.examzify.com

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

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