

MAJOR FIELD TEST IN PSYCHOLOGY

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The following questions illustrate the range of the test in terms of the abilities measured, the disciplines covered, and the difficulty of the questions posed. They should not, however, be considered representative of the entire scope of the test in either content or difficulty. An answer key follows the questions.

1. Breland and Breland trained pigs to carry wooden coins in their mouths to a piggy bank. This sequence was reinforced with food. After some weeks, however, the trained pigs began to root the coins with their noses, treating them like pieces of food. This can be best characterized as an example of
- (A) avoidance responding
 - (B) conditional responding
 - (C) superstitious behavior
 - (D) instinctive drift
 - (E) delayed conditioning

2. Which of the following therapeutic interventions places the most emphasis on gaining insight into early childhood relationships?
- (A) Systematic desensitization
 - (B) Behavior modification
 - (C) Family therapy
 - (D) Gestalt therapy
 - (E) Psychoanalysis

Questions 3 and 4 are based on the following passage.

A psychologist investigated the developmental relationship between the average daily amount of television viewing and the reading skills of children. Parents of children in four age groups (six year olds, seven year olds, eight year olds, and nine year olds) were asked to record the number of hours their children watched television for a six-month period. The psychologist also gave the children reading-speed and reading-comprehension tests on a monthly basis for the six-month period. Analyses of the data reveal the following correlations:

| Age | Correlation Between Hours Of Television Viewing and Reading Speed | Correlation Between Hours of Television Viewing and Reading Comprehension |
|-----|---|---|
| 6 | +0.13 | -0.32 |
| 7 | -0.03 | -0.38 |
| 8 | +0.07 | -0.41 |
| 9 | -0.05 | -0.49 |

3. The pattern of results above suggests which of the following about television watching?
- (A) It increases reading comprehension but does not increase reading speed.
 - (B) It has a stronger relationship to reading speed than to reading comprehension.
 - (C) It has a stronger relationship to reading comprehension than to reading speed.
 - (D) It diminishes the relationship between reading speed and reading comprehension.
 - (E) It has a diminishing relationship to reading skills as the child grows older.

4. Based on the correlational data, the psychologist claims that television viewing significantly reduces reading skills. This claim can be justly criticized because
- (A) children younger than ten years prefer television viewing to reading and the sample in the study is therefore biased
 - (B) a cross-sectional study cannot provide information about longitudinal development effects
 - (C) reading comprehension is more difficult to assess than is the amount of television viewing
 - (D) television viewing need not impede the acquisition and utilization of reading skills
 - (E) correlational data do not justify inferences about causes
5. A juror in a criminal case believes that the defendant's illegal act cannot be explained or excused by extenuating circumstances. According to attribution theory, the juror is most probably
- (A) making stereotypical judgments
 - (B) emphasizing dispositional factors
 - (C) discounting altruistic motivation
 - (D) overestimating situational causes
 - (E) relying on compliance to the law
6. Lesions in Broca's area of the association cortex are most likely to result in which of the following disorders?
- (A) Expressive aphasia
 - (B) Visual agnosia
 - (C) Apraxia
 - (D) Agraphia
 - (E) Alexia
7. A clinical psychologist is conducting a diagnostic interview with a client. Her impression that the client is suffering from paranoid schizophrenia would be supported by the presence of each of the following symptoms EXCEPT
- (A) poor contact with reality
 - (B) systematized delusions
 - (C) social withdrawal
 - (D) panic attacks
 - (E) loose associations
8. In the course of learning their first language, young children may say "goed" (for "went") and "man's" (for "men"). These kinds of errors suggest that young children tend to
- (A) pay little attention to what they hear
 - (B) overgeneralize the regularities that they hear in language
 - (C) produce words that they do not comprehend
 - (D) use correct grammatical forms only after they have developed a large vocabulary
 - (E) imitate the grammatical errors of adults
9. Those who study cognitive development have observed that young children are often unable to separate their own perspective from another person's point of view and instead confuse the two. According to Jean Piaget's developmental theory, the confusion results from the young child's
- (A) immature ego development
 - (B) pervasive egocentrism
 - (C) tendency to overregularize
 - (D) limited short-term memory capacity
 - (E) concrete-operational thinking
10. The occurrence of a conditioned response after experimental extinction has been followed by a period of rest is called
- (A) relearning
 - (B) disinhibition
 - (C) desensitization
 - (D) stimulus generalization
 - (E) spontaneous recovery

11. Sigmund Freud began his professional career as a

- (A) neurologist
- (B) psychiatrist
- (C) psychoanalyst
- (D) philosopher
- (E) ethnographer

12. A male European robin in his own territory responds aggressively when an intruding male robin challenges him with a display of red breast feathers. In this situation, the red breast feathers are referred to by ethologists as

- (A) conditioned stimuli
- (B) aversive stimuli
- (C) sign stimuli
- (D) negative incentives
- (E) contingent reinforcers

13. Jennifer's cherished beliefs are going to come under attack via a persuasive communication. Which of the following theories would be most relevant in helping Jennifer resist this imminent challenge to her beliefs?

- (A) Adaptation-level theory
- (B) Self-actualization theory
- (C) Balance theory
- (D) Social judgment theory
- (E) Inoculation theory

14. In the cochlea, mechanical energy caused by the flexing of the basilar membrane is converted into neural activity by specialized receptor cells. This process is referred to as

- (A) saturation
- (B) the Purkinje shift
- (C) central adaptation
- (D) transduction
- (E) transposition

15. Dichotic listening has been used extensively as an experimental technique in the study of

- (A) selective attention
- (B) transposition
- (C) the perception of a pitch
- (D) the Ponzo illusion
- (E) auditory hallucinations

Answer Key

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 9. B |
| 2. E | 10. E |
| 3. C | 11. A |
| 4. E | 12. C |
| 5. B | 13. E |
| 6. A | 14. D |
| 7. D | 15. A |
| 8. B | |



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