The following multiple-choice questions appeared on a psychology exam. Test your reasoning skills to see if you can eliminate items that seem incorrect. Make an educated guess to select the best answer for each question. Then check the answers and explanations at the end.

_____ 1. Modern psychological researchers maintain that the mind as well as behavior can be scientifically examined primarily by
   a. observing behavior and making inferences about mental functioning
   b. observing mental activity and making inferences about behavior
   c. making inferences about behavior
   d. direct observation of behavior

_____ 2. Jane Goodall studied the behavior of gorillas in their own habitat. She exemplified a school of psychology that is concerned with
   a. theories
   b. mental processes
   c. the individual’s potential for growth
   d. naturalistic behavior

_____ 3. If a psychologist were to personally witness the effects of a tornado upon the residents of a small town, what techniques would he or she be using?
   a. experimentation
   b. correlational research
   c. observation
   d. none of the above

_____ 4. A case study is a(n)
   a. observation of an event
   b. comparison of similar events
   c. study of changes and their effects
   d. intense investigation of a particular occurrence

_____ 5. Unlocking a combination padlock
   a. often involves language skills
   b. always involves motor skills
   c. never involves imagination
   d. seldom involves memory

These questions appeared on actual college tests. Even though you may not know the material, make an “intelligent guess.” In the space provided, explain WHY you chose your answer or how you eliminated wrong choices.

_____ 6. TRUE or FALSE? The only factors influencing the decision of the United States to enter World War I were economic ones.

_____ 7. TRUE or FALSE? Too much thyroxin can often result in tenseness and agitation.
8. TRUE or FALSE? It is not uncommon for rewards and praise to result in better behavior among children.

9. Prohibition
   a. was supported mainly by urban dwellers
   b. was an unqualified success
   c. failed because of widespread violations, an upsurge in crime, and inadequate enforcement.
   d. a decrease in crime occurred.

10. Schizophrenics labeled “paranoid”
    a. always display “waxy” flexibility
    b. usually fear that they are being persecuted
    c. are invariably children of schizophrenics
    d. always display multiple personalities
Answers and explanations, based on reasoning

1. Eliminate choice b right away. It’s silly because you can’t observe mental behavior. Notice that the stem it addresses two areas: the mind and behavior. The correct answer must address both. Therefore, you can also eliminate choices c and d because they only address behavior. The correct answer is choice a.

2. Because the question focuses on the behavior of gorillas, choices b and c can be eliminated right away. Don’t be tempted by choice a, “theories.” The stem focuses on the behavior of gorillas in their own habitat, so d is the best choice.

3. Because “personally witness” is a central part of the stem, the most likely answer is choice e, “observation.”

4. This question is about a case study. You can immediately eliminate choice b because a case study focuses on one person or event; also, the stem says “A case study” (you’d need two things for a comparison). Choice a is unlikely because a case study involves more than just observation. Choice e is vague so you’re left with choice d, the best description of a case study.

5. Common advice is that when you don’t know the answer and have to make a reasoned guess, avoid answers with the most extreme qualifying adverbs (all, always, everyone, everybody, never, no one, nobody). However, in this question two choices contain extreme adverbs: “always” in choice b and “never” in choice c. You could eliminate these two choices, but common sense tells you otherwise. Unlocking a padlock doesn’t really involve language skills so eliminate choice a. Unlocking a padlock does require memory (of the combination) so eliminate choice d. Choice e is silly, so you are left with choice b. Even though choice b contains the adverb “always,” you must use your hands (motor skills) to open a padlock. So don’t be distracted by the adverb “always.” (Here’s another example of TRUE statements that contain extreme words: “All triangles have three sides” and “The sun never shines at night.”)

6. Because of the extreme adverb “only,” this statement is probably false.

7. Because the adverb “often” is less extreme, this statement is probably “true.”

8. “…not uncommon” is a double negative. Mentally translate to eliminate the double negative (“It is common for rewards and praise to result in better behavior among children”) and you’ll realize that this statement is probably true.

9. You can immediately eliminate choice d because it is grammatically inconsistent with the stem. To select among the remaining three choices, you have to know a little bit about Prohibition. If you do, you’d probably eliminate choice a because it’s silly and choice b because “unqualified success” is also silly (Prohibition largely failed and was eventually repealed). You’re left with choice c. Another approach to making a reasonable guess it to notice that choice c is the most comprehensive.

10. Choice b is the best guess because its qualifying adverb (“usually”) is less extreme than those in the other choices (“always” in choices a and d and “invariably” in choice e).