

how many questions are on the phr exam

How Many Questions Are on the PHR Exam? A Comprehensive Guide

how many questions are on the phr exam is one of the most common queries among HR professionals preparing for their certification. Understanding the structure of the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) exam is crucial for effective study planning and reducing test-day anxiety. If you're aiming to become PHR certified, knowing the number of questions, the time allotted, and the exam's format can help you strategize your preparation and approach the exam with confidence.

In this article, we'll explore not only how many questions are on the PHR exam but also dive into the exam's content, timing, difficulty level, and offer some valuable tips to help you succeed.

Understanding the PHR Exam Structure

The PHR exam is designed to test the knowledge and skills of HR professionals in various domains such as employee relations, recruitment, compensation, and strategic management. It's administered by the HR Certification Institute (HRCI) and is recognized globally as a mark of HR expertise.

How Many Questions Are on the PHR Exam?

To answer the central question: the PHR exam consists of **approximately 90 scored questions**. However, the total number of questions you will see on the exam is around **110**, which includes about 20 unscored pre-test questions that are mixed in randomly. These unscored questions are used by HRCI to evaluate potential questions for future exams and do not affect your final score.

Knowing this helps set realistic expectations. You won't be able to differentiate between scored and unscored questions during the exam, so it's important to treat every question with equal attention.

Exam Duration and Time Management

The PHR exam is timed at **3 hours** (180 minutes). With around 110 questions to answer, this gives you roughly 1 minute and 38 seconds per question. Time management is key here, as spending too long on any single question can jeopardize your ability to complete the exam.

Developing a pacing strategy during your practice tests will help you get comfortable with

the time constraints. For example, if you find a question particularly challenging, it's often better to mark it for review and move on, returning to it later if time permits.

Content Areas Covered in the PHR Exam

While knowing how many questions are on the PHR exam is important, understanding the content these questions cover is equally vital. The exam is divided into multiple domains that reflect core HR responsibilities.

Domains and Their Weight on the Exam

The PHR exam tests candidates on five major functional areas, each weighted differently in terms of the number of questions:

- **Business Management and Strategy:** About 20% of the exam
- **Talent Planning and Acquisition:** Approximately 16%
- **Learning and Development:** Around 10%
- **Total Rewards:** Roughly 15%
- **Employee and Labor Relations:** Approximately 39%

This distribution means that employee and labor relations is the most heavily weighted category, so dedicating extra study time to this domain can be beneficial.

Types of Questions You Can Expect

The questions on the PHR exam are mostly multiple-choice and scenario-based, designed to assess both knowledge and application. You might encounter questions that require recalling HR concepts, interpreting case studies, or applying policies to hypothetical workplace situations.

The inclusion of situational questions means it's not enough to memorize facts — you should also practice critical thinking and decision-making skills relevant to HR.

Preparing for the PHR Exam: Tips Based on Exam

Structure

Knowing how many questions are on the PHR exam and the time limit helps inform your study and test-taking strategies. Here are some tips that take the exam's structure into account:

Create a Study Plan Aligned with Exam Content

Break down your study schedule based on the exam domains and their respective weights. For example, allocate more time to employee and labor relations given its significant portion on the test. Using official HRCI materials or reputable prep courses can ensure you cover all necessary topics.

Practice with Timed Mock Exams

Taking full-length, timed practice exams will familiarize you with the exam's pacing and format. This can reduce the surprise factor on test day and help you develop strategies for managing challenging questions.

Make sure your practice tests include around 110 questions to simulate the real experience, including the unscored ones, so you can build endurance and focus for the entire duration.

Master Time Management Techniques

Since you have roughly 1 minute and 38 seconds per question, practicing how to quickly analyze and answer questions is crucial. Some candidates use methods like:

- Answering easier questions first to secure quick points
- Flagging difficult questions for review to avoid getting stuck
- Keeping track of time at regular intervals during the exam

These tactics can help you stay on track and reduce stress.

Additional Insights About the PHR Exam

Scoring and Passing Criteria

The PHR exam is scored on a scaled system rather than a simple percentage. HRCI does not publicly disclose the exact passing score, but candidates typically need to correctly answer about 70% of the scored questions to pass. Remember, only the 90 scored questions count towards your score.

Retaking the Exam

If you don't pass the first time, you can retake the PHR exam. However, there are waiting periods and limits on the number of retakes per year, so understanding the exam format and number of questions can help you prepare better for subsequent attempts.

Continuing Education and Certification Maintenance

After passing the exam, maintaining your PHR credential requires ongoing professional development and recertification. Being aware of the exam's rigorous question count and breadth of topics can motivate candidates to continuously update their HR knowledge beyond the initial certification.

Final Thoughts on Knowing How Many Questions Are on the PHR Exam

Getting a clear picture of how many questions are on the PHR exam—about 110 in total, with 90 scored questions—and understanding the time constraints is a foundational step in your certification journey. This knowledge allows you to tailor your study habits, manage your time wisely during the test, and approach the exam with greater confidence.

By combining this awareness with focused study on the major HR domains, practicing with timed exams, and honing your test-taking strategies, you'll be well on your way to achieving PHR certification and advancing your career in human resources.

Frequently Asked Questions

How many questions are on the PHR exam?

The PHR exam consists of 150 multiple-choice questions.

Are all 150 questions on the PHR exam scored?

No, out of the 150 questions, 130 are scored, and 20 are pretest questions that do not

affect your score.

How long do I have to complete the PHR exam with 150 questions?

You have 3 hours (180 minutes) to complete the 150 questions on the PHR exam.

Do the number of questions on the PHR exam change frequently?

The number of questions on the PHR exam remains fairly consistent at 150, but it's best to check the latest from HRCI as updates can occur.

Is the PHR exam multiple choice with 150 questions?

Yes, the PHR exam is a multiple-choice exam containing 150 questions.

What is the format of the PHR exam questions?

The PHR exam includes 150 multiple-choice questions covering various HR topics, with 130 scored and 20 unscored pretest items.

Additional Resources

[How Many Questions Are on the PHR Exam? An In-Depth Exploration](#)

how many questions are on the phr exam is a common inquiry among HR professionals aspiring to earn the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification. Understanding the structure and content of the exam is crucial for effective preparation and successful certification. The PHR credential, administered by the HR Certification Institute (HRCI), is a respected benchmark for human resource expertise, focusing on operational and technical aspects of HR management. This article delves into the specifics of the PHR exam format, including the number of questions, time allocation, and the underlying framework that shapes this certification test.

The PHR Exam Format: A Closer Look

The PHR exam is designed to rigorously assess a candidate's knowledge and skills in various HR domains. One of the most frequently asked questions is how many questions are on the PHR exam and how these are distributed. Currently, the exam consists of 90 scored questions, along with additional unscored pretest questions that are embedded to evaluate new items for future exams.

Candidates are given a total of three hours to complete the exam. This time limit requires not only thorough knowledge of HR principles but also effective time management skills.

The exam is computer-based and administered at authorized testing centers worldwide, ensuring accessibility to candidates regardless of location.

Breakdown of Exam Questions

The 90 scored questions on the PHR exam are carefully crafted to cover a broad range of topics within the HR field. These questions span multiple-choice formats, requiring candidates to select the best answer from several options. Notably, the exam also includes approximately 25 unscored pretest questions, which are interspersed throughout the test without indication to the test taker. These unscored questions are vital for the continuous improvement of the exam but do not impact the candidate's score.

Understanding the presence of unscored questions is important for test-takers. Since these questions are indistinguishable from scored ones, candidates should approach every question with equal attention and seriousness.

Content Areas Covered on the PHR Exam

While the number of questions is a key concern, it is equally important to grasp the content areas these questions address. The PHR exam is structured around the HRCI's Body of Knowledge (BoK), which outlines the essential domains of HR expertise.

The exam questions are distributed across the following domains:

- Business Management and Strategy – approximately 20%
- Talent Planning and Acquisition – approximately 16%
- Learning and Development – approximately 9%
- Total Rewards – approximately 14%
- Employee and Labor Relations – approximately 19%
- Risk Management – approximately 22%

This distribution reflects the exam's emphasis on practical HR functions such as compliance, labor relations, and risk management, aligning with the professional responsibilities of mid-level HR practitioners.

Comparing the PHR Exam to Other HR Certifications

In the landscape of HR certifications, the PHR exam's 90 scored questions and three-hour duration are relatively standard but differ in nuance when compared to other certifications like the SHRM-CP (Society for Human Resource Management Certified Professional) exam. For instance, the SHRM-CP exam typically includes 160 questions over a 3.5-hour period, reflecting a broader scope with behavioral and situational judgment items.

The PHR's focus on operational and tactical HR knowledge distinguishes it from certifications that emphasize strategic and leadership competencies. Consequently, candidates may find the PHR exam more concentrated on regulations, policies, and procedural knowledge, which is mirrored in the question types and content weightings.

Strategies for Tackling the Number of Questions on the PHR Exam

Knowing how many questions are on the PHR exam is only part of the preparation puzzle. Candidates must also strategize to maximize their performance within the allotted time frame. With 90 scored questions and an additional 25 unscored items to navigate in three hours, pacing is critical.

Effective Time Management Techniques

- **Divide your time:** Allocate approximately two minutes per question, allowing some buffer for review and tougher items.
- **Answer and flag:** Answer all questions you are confident about first, then return to more challenging ones.
- **Stay consistent:** Avoid spending excessive time on any one question to prevent time pressure later in the exam.

Preparation should also include practice exams that replicate the actual number of questions and timing to build stamina and familiarity with the exam's rhythm.

The Role of Question Types in Exam Preparation

The multiple-choice format of the PHR exam questions requires not only knowledge recall but also application and analysis. Questions often present HR scenarios where candidates must select the best course of action based on laws, best practices, and organizational policies.

Understanding the nature of these questions helps candidates focus their study efforts on case studies, compliance guidelines, and operational processes. Incorporating scenario-

based practice questions into study plans can improve critical thinking skills necessary to handle the exam's complexity.

Impact of Exam Length and Question Volume on Candidate Experience

The total number of questions on the PHR exam can influence a candidate's test-taking experience in multiple ways. A moderate number like 90 scored questions strikes a balance between comprehensiveness and manageability. Candidates are tested thoroughly across all major HR domains without facing an overwhelming volume that could induce fatigue.

However, the added presence of unscored pretest questions can introduce an element of unpredictability. Test-takers must maintain consistent focus throughout the session, as every question could potentially count toward their final score.

Moreover, the three-hour duration demands sustained concentration and resilience. Candidates often report that mental endurance is as critical as content mastery when confronting the exam's length and question load.

Updates and Changes in Exam Structure

It is worth noting that the PHR exam format and number of questions are subject to revision by HRCI to reflect evolving HR practices and industry standards. Historically, the exam has undergone periodic updates to ensure relevance and rigor.

Prospective candidates should regularly consult official HRCI resources for the latest information on exam structure, including how many questions are on the PHR exam and the weight of each content area. Staying informed about changes helps avoid surprises and ensures alignment with current testing expectations.

Final Thoughts on Preparing for the PHR Exam

In the quest to understand how many questions are on the PHR exam, candidates gain insight into the exam's scope and demands. The 90 scored questions, supplemented by unscored items, challenge HR professionals to demonstrate a robust knowledge base across critical operational domains.

Effective preparation hinges on mastering both the content and the exam's format. Familiarity with the number of questions enables strategic planning, time management, and targeted study efforts. As the HR field continues to evolve, so too does the PHR exam, maintaining its role as a valuable credential for those committed to advancing their HR careers.

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