



FREE DOWNLOAD

ICF ACC Exam Sample Questions

10 ICF ACC practice questions with answers and explanations

60

multiple-choice
questions

90 min

exam appointment

460

scaled score to pass

3

exam areas

1. Answer all 10 questions first, without looking ahead.
2. Then check the answer key, which explains every option.
3. Note the competency or Code of Ethics standard behind each miss. That is where to study next.

These are original practice questions written by ExpertCoach.Co to match the ICF exam format, the ICF Core Competencies and the ICF Code of Ethics. None is taken from the real ICF exam.

Questions

Question 1

In a first session, a client says they want help "being more confident at work." What should the coach do first?

- ☐ (A) Ask the client what gets in the way of feeling confident at work.
- ☐ (B) Ask the client about a recent time they felt confident at work.
- ☐ (C) Agree on confidence at work as the goal and ask where to begin.
- ☐ (D) Ask the client what being more confident at work would look like.

Your answer _____

Question 2

Midway through a session, the coach asks a client what matters most to them in their career, and the client looks down and stays quiet for about twenty seconds. How should the coach respond?

- ☐ (A) Stay quiet and give the client time to think about the question.
- ☐ (B) Ask the question again in different words in case it was unclear.
- ☐ (C) Summarize what the client has said about their career so far.
- ☐ (D) Ask the client whether they would like to come back to this later.

Your answer _____

Question 3

A client's employer, who pays for the coaching and agreed at the start that only attendance would be reported, asks the coach what the client has been working on. What should the coach do?

- ☐ (A) Share the main themes of the coaching, but not what the client has said.
- ☐ (B) Decline, and point the employer to the confidentiality terms agreed at the start.
- ☐ (C) Report the client's attendance and add that they are making good progress.
- ☐ (D) Ask the employer what they want to know, then decide what to share.

Your answer _____

Question 4

A client describes a conflict with a colleague and, in passing, says, "I suppose I always end up being the reasonable one." How should the coach respond?

- ☐ (A) Ask what happened next in the conflict and how the client felt.
- ☐ (B) Ask how the colleague would describe the conflict if they were here.
- ☐ (C) Repeat the client's last remark back and ask what it means to them.
- ☐ (D) Acknowledge that being reasonable is a strength and ask how it helps them.

Your answer _____

Question 5

For the third session in a row, a client describes the same obstacle at work and ends by saying that nothing can change. What is the best action for the coach to take?

- ☐ (A) Offer the client a different way of looking at the obstacle.
- ☐ (B) Ask the client what they notice about coming back to this topic.
- ☐ (C) Ask the client which part of the obstacle they could act on first.
- ☐ (D) Ask the client what has made this obstacle so hard to change.

Your answer _____

Question 6

During a session, a coach notices they hold a strong personal view about which job offer the client should accept. What is the best action for the coach to take?

- ☐ (A) Share the view without attachment and ask what the client makes of it.
- ☐ (B) Make a note to reflect on the view with a mentor after the session.
- ☐ (C) Ask the client to say more about the option the coach has a view on.
- ☐ (D) Notice the view, set it aside and stay with the client's own thinking.

Your answer _____

Question 7

A client arrives ten minutes late for the third session in a row and says, "I'm so sorry, I feel like I keep letting you down." How should the coach respond?

- ☐ (A) Acknowledge the client's feeling and ask what they need to be ready to start.
- ☐ (B) Note that this is the third late start and ask what is behind it.
- ☐ (C) Say that it is fine and move on to the client's topic for today.
- ☐ (D) Go over the lateness terms in the agreement and ask if they still work.

Your answer _____

Question 8

A company that pays for a manager's coaching asks the coach to also assess that manager for an upcoming promotion. What should the coach do?

- ☐ (A) Accept the assessment and keep it separate from what is said in sessions.
- ☐ (B) Accept the assessment and base it only on what others say about the manager.
- ☐ (C) Talk through the conflict with the company and the manager before agreeing to anything.
- ☐ (D) Ask the manager privately whether they are comfortable with the coach assessing them.

Your answer _____

Question 9

For the second session in a row, a client has not started an action they chose, and says in a flat voice, "I know I really should do it." What is the best action for the coach to take?

- ☐ (A) Ask the client to break the action into smaller steps they could take.
- ☐ (B) Ask the client what has made the action difficult to start.
- ☐ (C) Ask the client what support would help them follow through this time.
- ☐ (D) Ask the client how much the action still matters to them now.

Your answer _____

Question 10

Midway through an engagement, the client's manager, who sponsors the coaching, asks the coach to add a goal the client has not agreed to. What should the coach do?

- ☐ (A) Set up a three-way conversation to agree on whether to add the goal.
- ☐ (B) Agree with the sponsor to add the goal and explain it to the client.
- ☐ (C) Ask the client how they feel about the request, then decide what to do.
- ☐ (D) Agree with the sponsor to revisit the goal at the next coaching review.

Your answer _____

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Answers and explanations

For every question: the correct answer, why it is correct with its ICF reference, and why each of the other options falls short.

Question 1 **Correct answer: D**

- **D is correct.** "More confident at work" can mean many things, so the client and coach need a shared picture of success before going further. D asks the client to describe what being more confident would look like in their own terms.

ICF Core Competency 3.8, Establishes and Maintains Agreements: "Partners with the client to define or reconfirm measures of success for what the client wants to accomplish in the coaching engagement or individual session."

- **A is incorrect.** Asking what gets in the way explores barriers (8.5), but it starts on obstacles before the client has said what success would look like.
- **B is incorrect.** Asking about a recent time the client felt confident looks at what is already working (7.6), but it comes before the client has defined the goal.
- **C is incorrect.** Agreeing on confidence at work as the goal sets a topic, but the goal is still too vague to know when the coaching has succeeded.

Question 2 **Correct answer: A**

- **A is correct.** The client has gone quiet right after a question about what matters to them, which suggests they are thinking. A gives them time to think instead of filling the silence.
- ICF Core Competency 5.6, Maintains Presence: "Creates or allows space for silence, pause or reflection."
- **B is incorrect.** Asking the question again in different words assumes it was unclear, but it interrupts thinking that is already happening.
 - **C is incorrect.** Summarizing what the client has said reflects their words (6.2), but it breaks the silence and pulls them back to what they said before.
 - **D is incorrect.** Offering to come back to this later checks in with the client, but it moves them away from the question before they have had time to answer it.

Question 3 **Correct answer: B**

- **B is correct.** Everyone agreed at the start that only attendance would be reported, so what the client is working on stays confidential. B keeps to that agreement and points the employer back to it.

ICF Code of Ethics 2020, Standard 3 (2025 Code 2.1): "Maintain the strictest levels of confidentiality with all parties as agreed upon. I am aware of and agree to comply with all applicable laws that pertain to personal data and communications."

- **A is incorrect.** Sharing the main themes holds back what the client said, but themes still go beyond the attendance everyone agreed to report.
 - **C is incorrect.** Reporting attendance keeps to the agreement, but adding that the client is making good progress shares more than was agreed.
 - **D is incorrect.** Asking the employer what they want to know opens a conversation, but the coach then decides alone what to share, outside the agreement made with the client.
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Question 4 Correct answer: C

- **C is correct.** The passing remark about "always" being the reasonable one hints at something bigger than this one conflict. C picks up the client's own words and invites them to say what they mean.
ICF Core Competency 6.3, Listens Actively: "Recognizes and inquires when there is more to what the client is communicating."
 - **A is incorrect.** Asking what happened next and how the client felt follows the story and their feelings (6.4), but it moves past the remark that hinted at more.
 - **B is incorrect.** Asking how the colleague would describe the conflict invites a new perspective (7.4), but it turns attention to the colleague just as the client said something about themselves.
 - **D is incorrect.** Acknowledging that being reasonable is a strength recognizes the client's qualities (4.3), but it puts the coach's view on the remark instead of asking what the client means by it.
-

Question 5 Correct answer: B

- **B is correct.** The client has come back to the same obstacle three sessions in a row, so the pattern itself is now worth looking at. B invites the client to notice what keeps bringing them back to it.
ICF Core Competency 7.8, Evokes Awareness: "Helps the client identify factors that influence current and future patterns of behavior, thinking or emotion."
 - **A is incorrect.** Offering a different way of looking at the obstacle aims at a new perspective (7.10), but the view is the coach's, and the repeated pattern goes unexplored.
 - **C is incorrect.** Asking which part the client could act on first moves toward action (8.2), but it skips past the pattern before the client has looked at it.
 - **D is incorrect.** Asking what has made the obstacle so hard to change explores it further, but it keeps the client inside the belief that nothing can change instead of looking at the pattern.
-

Question 6 Correct answer: D

- **D is correct.** The choice is the client's to make, and the coach's strong view could quietly steer it. D notices the view and keeps the focus on how the client is thinking about the offers.
ICF Core Competency 2.1, Embodies a Coaching Mindset: "Acknowledges that clients are responsible for their own choices."
 - **A is incorrect.** Sharing the view without attachment is open (7.11), but an opinion about the client's choice still adds weight to one option in a decision that belongs to the client.
 - **B is incorrect.** Planning to reflect on the view with a mentor is good practice (2.8), but it does not deal with the view while it can still shape this session.
 - **C is incorrect.** Asking the client to say more about the option the coach has a view on shows curiosity (5.2), but it gives that option the most attention and can steer the client toward it.
-

Question 7 Correct answer: A

- **A is correct.** The client is apologizing and says they feel they keep letting the coach down, so that feeling needs to be heard before the session moves on. A acknowledges the feeling and checks what the client needs to be ready.

ICF Core Competency 4.5, Cultivates Trust and Safety: "Acknowledges and supports the client's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs and suggestions."

- **B is incorrect.** Noting that this is the third late start points to a pattern (6.6), but raising it while the client feels they are letting the coach down can sound like a judgment.
 - **C is incorrect.** Saying it is fine and moving to today's topic reassures the client, but it passes over the feeling they have just shared.
 - **D is incorrect.** Going over the lateness terms checks the agreement (3.3), but doing it now puts the rules ahead of the client's feeling.
-

Question 8 Correct answer: C

- **C is correct.** Assessing the manager for a promotion while coaching them would mix two roles with competing interests, and both the company and the manager are affected. C works through the conflict with both of them before taking on the assessment.

ICF Code of Ethics 2020, Standard 18 (2025 Code 3.3): "Resolve any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest by working through the issue with relevant parties, seeking professional assistance, or suspending temporarily or ending the professional relationship."

ICF Code of Ethics 2020, Standard 10 (2025 Code 3.1): "Am sensitive to the implications of having multiple contracts and relationships with the same Client(s) and Sponsor(s) at the same time in order to avoid conflict of interest situations."

- **A is incorrect.** Keeping the assessment separate from the sessions tries to protect confidentiality, but the coach still knows what the manager has shared in sessions, so the conflict is not resolved.
 - **B is incorrect.** Basing the assessment only on what others say limits the coach's own input, but the coach still holds both roles, and the conflict is not worked through with the parties.
 - **D is incorrect.** Asking the manager privately checks with one party, but the company is also involved, and the manager may not feel free to say no to their coach.
-

Question 9 Correct answer: D

- **D is correct.** The client has not started the action twice and talks about it as something they "should" do, which suggests it may no longer feel like their own. D checks whether the action still matters to them before working on how to do it.

ICF Core Competency 8.3, Facilitates Client Growth: "Acknowledges and supports client autonomy in the design of goals, actions and methods of accountability."

- **A is incorrect.** Breaking the action into smaller steps helps design the action (8.2), but it makes the action easier without checking whether the client still wants it.
 - **B is incorrect.** Asking what has made the action difficult to start explores barriers (8.5), but it assumes the client still wants to do it.
 - **C is incorrect.** Asking what support would help the client follow through looks at resources (8.5), but it also assumes the action is still the right one.
-

Question 10

Correct answer: A

- **A is correct.** The coaching goals are set with both the client and the sponsor, and the client has not agreed to this one. A brings all three together to decide whether to add it.
ICF Core Competency 3.4, Establishes and Maintains Agreements: "Partners with the client and relevant stakeholders to establish an overall coaching plan and goals."
 - **B is incorrect.** Agreeing with the sponsor and then explaining the goal to the client keeps the client informed, but the client is told about the goal instead of agreeing to it.
 - **C is incorrect.** Asking the client how they feel about the request explores their view, but the coach then decides alone instead of agreeing with the client and the sponsor.
 - **D is incorrect.** Agreeing with the sponsor to revisit the goal later puts off the decision, but it is still made with the sponsor alone, without the client.
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How ready are you?

Count your correct answers out of 10.

9 to 10

You know the material well.
Take a full timed practice test
next to check your pace.

6 to 8

A good base. Go back to the
competencies and standards
behind your misses.

5 or fewer

Study the ICF Core
Competencies and the Code of
Ethics before you book the
exam.

How the real exam compares

The real ICF ACC exam has 60 multiple-choice questions in a 90-minute appointment, and you need a scaled score of 460 to pass. It covers three areas: Coaching Ethics (30%), Definition and Boundaries of Coaching (30%), and Coaching Competencies, Strategies and Techniques (40%). The format is the same, but you answer six times as many questions, against the clock.

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