TEXES CORE SUBJECTS EC–6 (391) · SUBJECT EXAM IV: SCIENCE 904

# Complete Guide to Passing Science 904

36 Practice Questions — Covering All 18 Competencies

With Full Answer Key & Explanations

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**www.teacherpreps.com/free/texes-391-science-904-guide**

## How to Use This Practice Set

This PDF contains 36 original practice questions drawn from the TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Science (904) exam. Questions cover all 18 competencies — 2 questions per competency — spanning lab safety, the nature of science, science and society, fundamental concepts, science instruction, assessment, physics, chemistry, biology, Earth science, and astronomy. Read each question carefully, select your answer, then check the highlighted correct response and explanation below it.


**Q1.** Competency 001 — Lab Processes, Equipment, and Safety

**Q2.** Competency 001 — Lab Processes, Equipment, and Safety

**Q3.** Competency 002 — History and Nature of Science

**Q4.** Competency 002 — History and Nature of Science

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**Q6.** Competency 003 — Impact of Science on Society, Technology, and the Environment

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**Q34.** Competency 017 — Energy in Weather and Climate Systems


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**Q35.** Competency 018 — The Solar System, Galaxies, and the Universe

**Q36.** Competency 018 — The Solar System, Galaxies, and the Universe

**Tip:** Cover the answer key with a sheet of paper while you work through each question. The correct answer is highlighted in green with a checkmark.

**Question 1 of 36** Competency 001 — Lab Processes, Equipment, and Safety

A student accidentally spills an unknown liquid chemical on her hand during a lab. What should she do first?

A Tell the teacher immediately before doing anything else

B ✓ **Flush the affected area with water for at least 15 minutes**

C Apply a neutralizing substance to the skin right away

D Cover the area with a paper towel and wait for instructions

**EXPLANATION**

Immediate and prolonged flushing with water is the first response to any chemical skin contact — 15 minutes is the standard minimum. Notifying the teacher is important but comes after, not before, flushing. Applying a neutralizing substance without knowing the chemical could cause an additional reaction.

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**Question 2 of 36** Competency 001 — Lab Processes, Equipment, and Safety

A third-grade class is growing bean plants to observe germination. Which tool is MOST appropriate for measuring how tall the seedlings grow over two weeks?

A Triple-beam balance

B Graduated cylinder

C ✓ **Metric ruler**

D Thermometer

**EXPLANATION**

A metric ruler measures linear growth (height), which is exactly what is being observed. A triple-beam balance measures mass; a graduated cylinder measures liquid volume; a thermometer measures temperature — none of these apply to tracking plant height.

**Question 3 of 36** Competency 002 — History and Nature of Science

A scientist publishes findings that contradict a widely accepted theory. Other scientists replicate the study and get the same results. What does this BEST illustrate about science?

A Scientific theories can never be overturned once accepted

B Science relies on a single expert's authority to determine truth

C ✓ **Scientific knowledge is tentative and subject to revision based on new evidence**

D Replication of results proves that a theory is incorrect

**EXPLANATION**

Science is self-correcting: when reproducible evidence contradicts an existing theory, the theory is revised or replaced. This tentative nature is a defining feature of scientific knowledge. A is false — well-supported theories can still be modified. B contradicts peer review. D is incorrect because replication confirms findings but does not automatically invalidate the broader theory.

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**Question 4 of 36** Competency 002 — History and Nature of Science

A student sets up an experiment to test whether fertilizer affects plant growth by using two identical pots — one with fertilizer and one without — kept in the same window. Which term BEST describes the pot without fertilizer?

A Independent variable

B Dependent variable

C ✓ **Control group**

D Hypothesis

**EXPLANATION**

The pot without fertilizer is the control group — it receives no treatment so that any difference in growth can be attributed to the fertilizer. The independent variable is the fertilizer (what is changed); the dependent variable is plant growth (what is measured); a hypothesis is a testable prediction, not a group.

**Question 5 of 36** Competency 003 — Impact of Science on Society, Technology, and the Environment

A community proposes building a dam to generate hydroelectric power. Which statement BEST describes a trade-off associated with this decision?

A The dam will eliminate all environmental concerns in the area

B ✓ **Generating renewable energy may require disrupting local river ecosystems**

C Hydroelectric power produces more carbon emissions than coal plants

D Technology has no effect on the natural environment

**EXPLANATION**

A trade-off is a benefit gained at the cost of something else. Hydroelectric power is renewable and low-emission, but building a dam can disrupt fish migration, alter water temperature, and flood upstream habitats. A is false — the dam creates its own environmental impacts. C is incorrect — hydroelectric produces far less carbon than coal. D is factually wrong.

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**Question 6 of 36** Competency 003 — Impact of Science on Society, Technology, and the Environment

A teacher wants students to understand how science and society mutually influence each other. Which example BEST demonstrates this relationship?

A A student memorizes the periodic table

B A scientist works alone in a lab with no outside communication

C ✓ **Public concern about air quality drives funding for cleaner fuel research**

D A textbook lists the steps of the scientific method

**EXPLANATION**

This example shows society influencing science (public concern drives research priorities) and science potentially influencing society back (cleaner fuels change energy policy and public health). A and D are learning activities with no societal feedback loop. B describes science isolated from society, which is the opposite of the concept.

**Question 7 of 36** Competency 004 — Fundamental Concepts and Processes

A student observes that ice melts in a warm room. Which type of energy transfer is primarily responsible?

A Radiation from the ice to the room

B ✓ **Conduction and convection transferring thermal energy from the air to the ice**

C Chemical energy stored in the ice being released

D The ice generating its own heat through friction

**EXPLANATION**

Thermal energy always flows from warmer to cooler objects. The warmer air transfers heat to the ice by conduction (air molecules contacting the ice surface) and convection (warm air currents). Ice melting is a physical change, not a chemical reaction, so no stored chemical energy is released. Ice cannot generate heat through friction on its own.

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**Question 8 of 36** Competency 004 — Fundamental Concepts and Processes

Which of the following is an example of a physical change rather than a chemical change?

A Wood burning in a fireplace

B Iron rusting on a fence

C ✓ **Sugar dissolving in water**

D Baking soda reacting with vinegar to produce gas

**EXPLANATION**

Dissolving sugar in water is a physical change — the sugar molecules remain unchanged and can be recovered by evaporating the water. Burning wood, rusting iron, and baking soda reacting with vinegar all produce new substances with different chemical properties, which are the hallmarks of chemical change.

**Question 9 of 36** Competency 005 — Students as Learners and Science Instruction

Before starting a unit on ecosystems, a teacher asks students to draw and label what they think happens when a wolf is removed from a food chain. This activity is MOST useful for:

A ✓ **Assessing students' prior knowledge and identifying misconceptions**

B Teaching students the correct definition of an ecosystem

C Replacing the need for hands-on investigation

D Demonstrating the teacher's knowledge of the topic

**EXPLANATION**

Eliciting prior knowledge at the start of a unit reveals what students already understand and where they hold misconceptions — both of which guide instruction. This is a diagnostic strategy, not a teaching moment for definitions (B) or a replacement for inquiry (C). It is not a teacher demonstration (D).

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**Question 10 of 36** Competency 005 — Students as Learners and Science Instruction

A teacher uses a 5E lesson structure (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate). During the Explore phase, what should students primarily be doing?

A Listening to the teacher present new vocabulary and key definitions

B ✓ **Conducting hands-on investigations to generate data and observations**

C Taking a quiz on the concepts from the previous unit

D Reading the textbook chapter independently

**EXPLANATION**

The Explore phase is student-driven inquiry — learners manipulate materials, collect observations, and generate questions before the teacher provides formal explanations. Vocabulary and definitions belong in the Explain phase. Quizzes are evaluative. Textbook reading is passive and does not match the hands-on intent of Explore.

**Question 11 of 36** Competency 006 — Science Assessment

A teacher uses exit tickets at the end of each science lesson to check student understanding of the day's concept. This is BEST described as:

A Summative assessment

B ✓ **Formative assessment**

C Performance-based assessment

D Norm-referenced assessment

**EXPLANATION**

Exit tickets are formative assessments — brief, ongoing checks for understanding that inform instruction in real time. Summative assessments measure learning after instruction is complete (e.g., end-of-unit tests). Performance-based assessments require students to demonstrate skills through tasks. Norm-referenced assessments compare students against each other.

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**Question 12 of 36** Competency 006 — Science Assessment

A teacher wants to assess students' ability to design a controlled experiment. Which assessment method is MOST appropriate?

A A multiple-choice test on vocabulary terms

B A matching activity connecting scientist names to their discoveries

C ✓ **A performance task where students plan and conduct their own investigation**

D A true/false quiz about lab safety rules

**EXPLANATION**

Designing a controlled experiment is a process skill that requires demonstration, not recall. A performance task directly measures whether students can apply the scientific method — it aligns assessment to the skill being evaluated. Multiple-choice, matching, and true/false questions measure knowledge recall, not the ability to design an investigation.

**Question 13 of 36** Competency 007 — Force, Motion, and Energy

A student pushes a heavy box across the floor and a light box with the same force. Which result correctly applies Newton's Second Law (F = ma)?

A Both boxes accelerate at the same rate because the same force is applied

B The heavy box accelerates more because it has more mass

C ✓ **The light box accelerates more because it has less mass**

D The heavy box moves faster because friction acts on it less

**EXPLANATION**

Newton's Second Law states F = ma, so a = F/m. With the same force, the object with less mass (the light box) experiences greater acceleration. The heavy box has more inertia and accelerates less. A is incorrect — mass affects acceleration. B reverses the relationship. D is incorrect — heavier objects typically experience more friction.

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**Question 14 of 36** Competency 007 — Force, Motion, and Energy

A student uses a ramp to slide a box onto a loading dock. Which type of simple machine is a ramp?

A Lever

B Pulley

C Wheel and axle

D ✓ **Inclined plane**

**EXPLANATION**

A ramp is an inclined plane — a flat surface tilted at an angle that reduces the force needed to raise an object by increasing the distance over which the force is applied. A lever uses a rigid bar and fulcrum. A pulley uses a rope and wheel. A wheel and axle transfers force through rotation. None of these describe a ramp.

**Question 15 of 36** Competency 008 — Physical Properties of Matter

A student measures the mass and volume of four objects and calculates density. Which property of a substance does density describe?

A ✓ **The amount of matter packed into a given volume**

B The total mass of all atoms in the substance

C The surface area of the substance

D The temperature at which the substance melts

**EXPLANATION**

Density = mass ÷ volume. It describes how much mass is packed into a unit of volume — a denser object has more matter in the same space. B describes total mass, not density. C describes surface area — a separate property. D describes melting point — another physical property unrelated to density.

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**Question 16 of 36** Competency 008 — Physical Properties of Matter

Water boils at 100°C at sea level. This is an example of which type of property?

A Chemical property

B ✓ **Physical property**

C Extensive property only

D Biological property

**EXPLANATION**

Boiling point is a physical property — it describes a characteristic of a substance that can be observed or measured without changing its chemical identity. Chemical properties describe how a substance reacts or changes into a new substance. Extensive properties depend on amount (like mass or volume). Biological property is not a standard chemistry classification.

**Question 17 of 36** Competency 009 — Changes in Matter

When baking soda is mixed with vinegar, bubbles form and the temperature of the mixture drops slightly. What type of change has occurred?

A Physical change — no new substance is produced

B ✓ **Chemical change — new substances and energy changes are observed**

C Nuclear change — atoms have been split

D Physical change — the temperature change indicates only energy transfer

**EXPLANATION**

A chemical change produces one or more new substances and is accompanied by evidence such as gas production, temperature change, color change, or precipitate formation. Here, $CO_2$ gas is produced and a temperature drop (endothermic reaction) occurs — both indicate new substances have formed. Physical changes do not produce new substances.

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**Question 18 of 36** Competency 009 — Changes in Matter

Which of the following is an example of a physical change?

A Burning paper

B Milk souring

C ✓ **Tearing paper into small pieces**

D Iron rusting

**EXPLANATION**

Tearing paper changes its shape and size but does not create a new substance — the paper's chemical composition remains cellulose. This is a physical change. Burning paper (A), milk souring (B), and iron rusting (D) all produce new substances with different chemical properties, making them chemical changes.

**Question 19 of 36** Competency 010 — Energy Transformations and Conservation

A solar panel on a rooftop generates electricity to power a home. Which energy transformation is occurring?

A Chemical energy → electrical energy

B Thermal energy → mechanical energy

C ✓ **Radiant (light) energy → electrical energy**

D Electrical energy → radiant energy

**EXPLANATION**

A solar panel (photovoltaic cell) converts radiant energy from sunlight directly into electrical energy through the photovoltaic effect. A describes a battery or fuel cell. B describes a steam turbine. D is the reverse — describing a light bulb converting electricity to light, not a solar panel.

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**Question 20 of 36** Competency 010 — Energy Transformations and Conservation

In a food chain, a plant captures 10,000 calories from sunlight. A rabbit eats the plant and a fox eats the rabbit. Approximately how many calories are available to the fox?

A 10,000 calories

B 1,000 calories

C ✓ **100 calories**

D 50 calories

**EXPLANATION**

The 10% rule states that only about 10% of energy transfers between trophic levels — the rest is lost as heat. Plant (10,000) → rabbit receives 1,000 (10%) → fox receives 100 (10% of 1,000). B is the rabbit's available energy, not the fox's. A would require 100% efficiency. D has no basis in the 10% rule.

**Question 21 of 36** Competency 011 — Structure and Function of Living Things

A student notices that a cell contains chloroplasts, a large central vacuole, and a rigid cell wall. What type of cell is this most likely?

A Animal cell

B Bacterial cell

C ✓ **Plant cell**

D Fungal cell

**EXPLANATION**

Chloroplasts, a large central vacuole, and a cellulose cell wall are exclusive to plant cells. Animal cells lack all three. Bacterial cells are prokaryotes and lack membrane-bound organelles entirely. Fungal cells have a cell wall made of chitin (not cellulose) and no chloroplasts.

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**Question 22 of 36** Competency 011 — Structure and Function of Living Things

Which correctly lists the levels of biological organization from smallest to largest?

A Organ → Tissue → Cell → Organ System → Organism

B ✓ **Cell → Tissue → Organ → Organ System → Organism**

C Tissue → Cell → Organ → Organism → Organ System

D Cell → Organ → Tissue → Organ System → Organism

**EXPLANATION**

The correct sequence is Cell → Tissue → Organ → Organ System → Organism. Cells of similar type form tissues; tissues organize into organs; organs working together form organ systems; organ systems make up the complete organism. All other options disorder this hierarchy.

**Question 23 of 36** Competency 012 — Reproduction and Heredity

A farmer notices that all strawberry plants in a row produce fruit with identical flavor and appearance. Which reproductive strategy MOST likely explains this?

A Sexual reproduction through cross-pollination

B ✓ **Asexual reproduction through vegetative propagation**

C Genetic mutation in the parent plant

D Environmental adaptation over several generations

**EXPLANATION**

Strawberries spread asexually via stolons (runners), producing genetic clones of the parent plant. Because all plants share identical DNA, they produce fruit with identical characteristics. Cross-pollination (A) produces genetic variation. Mutation (C) creates differences, not sameness. Adaptation (D) occurs over many generations, not within a single row.

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**Question 24 of 36** Competency 012 — Reproduction and Heredity

Which of the following is an inherited trait rather than a learned behavior?

A A dog trained to sit on command

B A bird that has learned the route of its migration path

C ✓ **A kitten born with blue eyes**

D A child who has learned to ride a bicycle

**EXPLANATION**

Eye color is genetically encoded in DNA and is present at birth without any experience or practice. This is an inherited trait. The dog's sitting (A), the bird's learned route (B), and the child's cycling skill (D) are all behaviors acquired through experience or training — not encoded in DNA.

**Question 25 of 36** Competency 013 — Adaptations and Evolution

An arctic fox has white fur in winter and brown fur in summer, matching its surroundings each season. This is an example of which type of adaptation?

A Behavioral adaptation

B Physiological adaptation

C ✓ **Structural adaptation**

D Learned adaptation

**EXPLANATION**

Fur color is a physical (structural) feature encoded in DNA. The seasonal color change is triggered automatically by changing daylight hours — it is a structural characteristic, not a behavior or internal chemistry process. D is a distractor — 'learned adaptation' is not a recognized biological category.

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**Question 26 of 36** Competency 013 — Adaptations and Evolution

In a population of beetles, green beetles survive longer than brown beetles because they blend in with leaves. Over many generations, natural selection predicts that:

A Brown beetles will develop green coloring through effort

B ✓ **The proportion of green beetles in the population will increase**

C Birds will learn to avoid eating beetles entirely

D All beetles will eventually become the same color

**EXPLANATION**

Natural selection increases the frequency of favorable traits in a population. Green beetles survive longer → reproduce more → pass green genes to more offspring → green trait becomes more common. A is Lamarckian — organisms cannot change their own DNA by trying. C describes bird behavior, not beetle evolution. D oversimplifies; brown beetles may persist at low frequencies.

**Question 27 of 36** Competency 014 — Organisms and the Environment

Remora fish attach to sharks and eat leftover food scraps. The shark is neither helped nor harmed. What type of symbiosis is this?

A Mutualism

B ✓ **Commensalism**

C Parasitism

D Predation

**EXPLANATION**

Commensalism is a +/0 relationship — one organism benefits, the other is unaffected. The remora benefits (gets food); the shark neither gains nor loses. Mutualism (+/+) requires both to benefit. Parasitism (+/–) requires the host to be harmed. Predation is one organism hunting and consuming another, not a long-term symbiotic relationship.

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**Question 28 of 36** Competency 014 — Organisms and the Environment

In a meadow food chain: grass → grasshoppers → frogs → hawks. If all frogs are eliminated by disease, which outcome is MOST likely?

A Grasshopper population decreases and hawk population increases

B ✓ **Grasshopper population increases and hawk population decreases**

C Both grasshopper and hawk populations increase

D Only the grass population is affected

**EXPLANATION**

Without frogs, grasshoppers have no predator and their population increases. Hawks lose their primary food source (frogs) and their population declines. A reverses the effects. C is impossible — hawks lose food. D ignores the effects on the rest of the food chain.

**Question 29 of 36** Competency 015 — Earth Systems Structure

Which layer of Earth is responsible for generating the planet's magnetic field?

A The inner core

B The mantle

C ✓ **The outer core**

D The crust

**EXPLANATION**

The outer core is composed of liquid iron and nickel. Earth's rotation causes this conducting liquid to circulate, generating the geodynamo effect that creates Earth's magnetic field. The inner core is solid and does not flow. The mantle drives plate tectonics through convection. The crust is the thin outer rock layer with no magnetic-generating property.

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**Question 30 of 36** Competency 015 — Earth Systems Structure

A scientist finds a rock containing visible layers and the fossil of a fern. Which rock type is this most likely?

A Igneous rock

B Metamorphic rock

C ✓ **Sedimentary rock**

D Volcanic rock

**EXPLANATION**

Sedimentary rocks form when layers of sediment are compacted and cemented together. Organisms buried in sediment before compaction can become fossils — which is why fossils are found only in sedimentary rock. Igneous rocks form from cooled magma, destroying any organic material. Metamorphic rocks form under intense heat and pressure, also obliterating fossils. Volcanic rock is a type of igneous rock.

**Question 31 of 36** Competency 016 — Cycles in Earth Systems

Water vapor in the atmosphere rises, cools, and forms tiny droplets around dust particles, creating clouds. Which water cycle process is occurring?

A Evaporation

B ✓ **Condensation**

C Precipitation

D Transpiration

**EXPLANATION**

Condensation is the process where water vapor cools and changes from a gas to a liquid, forming cloud droplets. Evaporation is the opposite — liquid water becoming vapor. Precipitation is water falling from clouds as rain or snow. Transpiration is water vapor released from plant leaves — not cloud formation.

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**Question 32 of 36** Competency 016 — Cycles in Earth Systems

A student claims summer is hotter than winter because Earth is closer to the Sun in summer. What is the best correction?

A The student is correct — Earth is closer to the Sun in summer

B ✓ **Seasons are caused by Earth's axial tilt, not its distance from the Sun**

C Seasons are caused by Earth's rotation changing sunlight each day

D Seasons are caused by changes in Earth's distance from the Moon

**EXPLANATION**

Earth's axis is tilted 23.5°. When the Northern Hemisphere tilts toward the Sun, sunlight strikes more directly and days are longer — summer. When tilted away, less direct sunlight and shorter days — winter. Earth is actually slightly farther from the Sun during Northern Hemisphere summer (perihelion occurs in January). C confuses daily rotation with annual revolution. D is incorrect — the Moon doesn't cause seasons.

**Question 33 of 36** Competency 017 — Energy in Weather and Climate Systems

A region experiences sudden severe thunderstorms followed by a sharp temperature drop. Which type of weather front is most likely approaching?

A Warm front

B ✓ **Cold front**

C Stationary front

D High pressure system

**EXPLANATION**

Cold fronts move fast, pushing cold dense air under warm air steeply — causing rapid uplift, towering cumulonimbus clouds, severe thunderstorms, and a sharp temperature drop after passage. Warm fronts (A) rise gradually and produce steady, light precipitation. Stationary fronts (C) cause prolonged rain without sharp temperature changes. High pressure systems (D) bring clear, fair weather.

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**Question 34 of 36** Competency 017 — Energy in Weather and Climate Systems

Which statement BEST describes the role of greenhouse gases in Earth's energy balance?

A They reflect all solar radiation back into space, keeping Earth cool

B ✓ **They absorb and re-emit infrared radiation, warming Earth's surface**

C They block ultraviolet radiation from reaching Earth's surface

D They produce oxygen through photosynthesis

**EXPLANATION**

Greenhouse gases ($CO_2$, water vapor, methane) allow sunlight to pass through but trap infrared radiation emitted by Earth's surface, re-radiating some back down and warming the surface. A is incorrect — greenhouse gases trap, they don't reflect all radiation. C describes the ozone layer, a common confusion. D describes plants, not atmospheric gases.

**Question 35 of 36** Competency 018 — The Solar System, Galaxies, and the Universe

Which planet is the largest in our solar system and is classified as a gas giant?

A Saturn

B Neptune

C ✓ **Jupiter**

D Uranus

**EXPLANATION**

Jupiter is the largest planet — more than 1,300 Earths could fit inside it. It is a true gas giant composed mostly of hydrogen and helium. Saturn (A) is second largest and also a gas giant, but smaller than Jupiter. Uranus (D) and Neptune (B) are ice giants, composed largely of water, methane, and ammonia ices — different from gas giants.

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Question 36 of 36 Competency 018 — The Solar System, Galaxies, and the Universe

What is the primary cause of the Moon's phases as observed from Earth?

A Earth's shadow falling on the Moon

B The Moon rotating on its own axis

C ✓ The Moon orbiting Earth, changing our view of its sunlit half

D Clouds on Earth blocking different portions of the Moon

**EXPLANATION**

The Moon's orbit around Earth (approximately 29.5 days) gradually changes which portion of its sunlit half faces us. At new moon, the lit side faces away; at full moon, it faces us entirely. A describes a lunar eclipse — a rare alignment event, not the monthly phase cycle. B and D do not cause the phase changes we observe.

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