



Civil Service
Human Resources

Verbal and numerical reasoning tests

A guide for candidates



Civil Service psychometric tests

The Civil Service uses psychometric tests alongside other assessment methods (such as application forms, competency evidence, and interviews) to decide whether a person has the required capabilities to meet the needs of a job at a particular grade.

Using tests can offer benefits by:

- giving candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their strengths
- providing the recruiter with an objective method of assessing candidates on relevant criteria
- helping identify areas where candidates could benefit from further development

The tests are fair and free from bias or discrimination because:

- they are robust as measurement tools – they work effectively each time they are used
- there is no advantage in having more educational qualifications or work experience
- provided that the test is administered appropriately, including the correct use of cut-off benchmarks, the tests have been found to be fair towards all protected groups and to predict candidates' performance in later stages of selection

Your personal information is held securely in Civil Service Jobs. The test supplier does not see your personal information and will only know your name if you choose to share it with them. Your information will only be used for the purposes of enabling your application for a job and for evaluating the effectiveness of the tests.

About the Verbal and Numerical Reasoning Tests

The Verbal Reasoning Test (VRT) and Numerical Reasoning Test (NRT) are measures of general mental ability, which is recognised as the strongest single source predictor of job performance at all seniority levels, across sectors of the workplace.

The online tests measure:

1. verbal reasoning: the ability to use written information to think about something in a logical way to form a conclusion or judgement
2. numerical reasoning: the ability to critically evaluate numerical information, understand patterns and trends in data, and the ability to make sensible conclusions or judgements

These tests are used to help recruiters assess whether you meet the minimum requirements for the grade/level that you have applied for, although they do not test the skills that might be needed for a specific job at that grade/level.

You may be asked to complete one or other, or both, of the tests.

The structure of the tests

In the verbal reasoning test you'll read a paragraph, which is followed by a statement. You need to decide if the statement is either true, false or not possible to say, based on the information in the paragraph.

In the numerical reasoning test, you'll read either a table, graph or other numerical information, followed by a question with several possible answers. You need to decide which of the possible answers is correct.

The tests are **not timed** because the tests work differently to a fixed length test. They work by giving you harder questions if you get the previous question correct, and easier questions if you get it wrong. You should allow up to an hour for each test, but you shouldn't need that long, and you shouldn't have to complete too many difficult questions.

You won't be able to go back and look at previous answers, so ensure that your first answer is your best.

No specialist knowledge or experience is needed for either test.

Practice questions are included at the beginning of the test.

Taking a test

The test is taken online and we will send you an invitation and will provide full instructions on how to complete the test.

You should complete the test on your own, as we may retest you under supervised conditions to validate your test results.

The tests should work on most modern browsers and operating systems with a stable internet connection, and while they should work on smartphones or tablets, we recommend that you use a device with a larger screen if possible. If your browser is not supported, the test will alert you and suggest that you try an alternative.

You'll need to remain connected to the internet for the duration of the test.

It is possible to close the browser and re-open the test at the place you left off, but you can only do this twice after having initially started the test (three sessions in total).

While there is no time limit on the test, if you're inactive for more than 25 minutes the test will time out and you'll need to re-open the test from your application centre.

Your final score will not be affected by how long you take to complete the test – only the number and difficulty of the questions you answered correctly is scored.

Some workplaces block access to this type of test on their computers. If this is the case, you may need to try an alternative device.

If you need a reasonable adjustment to be made (for example, if your assistive technology is not compatible with the test) you should contact the recruitment team or the point of contact in the job advert.

You can use a calculator in the NRT.

Preparation

You should try to take the test as early as possible after you are invited to, so that you will have time to resolve any technical or access issues before the deadline. All queries or requests for help should be submitted at least two working days before the test deadline to ensure a response.

- Find a quiet place to take the test, with no distractions
- Try to take the tests when you are feeling calm, although it's natural to feel a little nervous
- Allow around an hour for each test, although they are not timed
- You may wish to have some rough paper, pen and calculator available
- Make sure you have read all the test instructions carefully
- Answer every question that is presented to you – you can't skip or go back

Before taking either of these tests, we suggest you spend some time getting used to taking psychometric tests. Two practice tests have been developed: the [verbal reasoning](#) and [numerical reasoning](#) tests demonstrate the kind of test you will be completing.

Test results

The number and difficulty of the questions you answered is used to produce your score.

Your score is compared to the scores of a representative group to create a percentile score. If your percentile score is 44, it means you scored better on this test than 44% of the group.

After the test deadline, the recruiter will look at the test scores for all applicants to decide what the pass mark will be. They will consider the impact on protected groups, and the number of available invitations to the next stage.

Meeting the minimum required standard for the test is no guarantee that you will be invited to the next stage of the selection process.

If you pass a test at the minimum required standard, your score will be banked for six months. This means that if you apply for future vacancies at the same grade, you won't need to retake the test. If you don't pass, you will be able to take the test again for any future vacancies you apply for.

Feedback from the test

Your score and automatically-generated feedback on your performance will be available from your application centre in Civil Service Jobs, although this won't include details of your answers to specific questions, which we can't provide.

What to do if you encounter a problem during the test

If you lose access during the test, sign in to your application centre to relaunch the test. You can launch the test three times in total, and this doesn't have to be on the same computer.

For further support, contact your recruitment team. Their email address is in your application centre if you're invited to take a test.

Alternatively, you can contact the recruitment team through our [form](#).

Questions about the advertised job should be directed to the contact on the job advert.