

Guidance

Preparing for the Civil Service Verbal and Numerical tests

Guidance for job applicants completing an online test through Civil Service Jobs.

From: **Cabinet Office** (</government/organisations/cabinet-office>)

Published 31 October 2019

Last updated 11 February 2022 —

Contents

- Why we use online recruitment tests
- What our tests measure
- Taking a test
- No time limit
- Before starting
- Practice tests
- Test access
- Your score and results
- Banked scores
- Get help
- How we use your data

This page is also available [in Welsh \(Cymraeg\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/paratoi-ar-gyfer-profion-geiriol-a-rhifiadol-y-)
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/paratoi-ar-gyfer-profion-geiriol-a-rhifiadol-y->

[gwasanaeth-sifil](#)).

Why we use online recruitment tests

The Civil Service uses psychometric tests alongside other assessment methods (such as application forms, evidence of technical skills and interviews) to assess aptitude, potential and whether a person meets the requirements of a particular job level.

Using tests can:

- allow candidates to demonstrate their strengths,
- provide recruiters with objective assessments against relevant criteria, and
- identify where candidates could develop their skills.

Provided they are used appropriately, our tests are fair and free from bias or discrimination. As such:

- they offer robust and effective measurements,
- there is no advantage to having additional educational qualifications or work experience,
- they can predict candidate performance in later selection stages.

What our tests measure

The Civil Service Verbal and Numerical Tests (CSV and CSNT, respectively) measure general mental ability. This is recognised as the strongest predictor of job performance at all job seniority levels, and across all workplace sectors.

These tests measure:

1. Verbal test: the ability to identify relevant information and draw logical conclusions from written information.
2. Numerical test: the ability to perform calculations, and evaluate and interpret numerical information to solve problems.

The tests assess your ability, which is one of the five elements in the [Success Profiles Framework](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/success-profiles>). The Civil Service uses Success Profiles to provide flexible recruiting means, giving the best possible chance of finding the right person for a job.

You may be asked to complete either the Verbal test, Numerical test, or both depending on the job you have applied for.

These tests are able to be completed in either English or Welsh - just select the option you prefer at the start of the test. Alternative guidance (in Welsh) is available at the top of this page.

Taking a test

The test is taken online. You will be sent an invitation by email, which provides full instructions on how to proceed.

Your test answers should be your own; you must not ask for input from anyone. The hiring manager may require candidates to retake the test under supervised conditions - we will inform you whether you are expected to do this if you are invited to interview.

In the Verbal test, you will be presented with a text passage followed by a statement. You must decide whether the statement is 'true', 'false', or you 'cannot say' based on the information given.

In the Numerical test, you will be presented with graphs, tables or other numerical information, followed by a question with several possible answers. You must identify which answer is correct.

You will be asked to answer some trial items during the test. These items are not scored and do not form part of your assessment. Your answers to these questions help us calibrate new questions for future tests.

No time limit

Tests are not timed, however most people take between 15 and 45 minutes to complete each one. Your final score will not be affected by how long you take.

Please be aware of the application deadline when taking tests. If you are taking a test and the deadline passes before you have finished, your test will not be stopped but your application will have missed the overall deadline for submission.

The tests adapt to your performance - if you get a question right the next question may become harder, and if you get a question wrong the next question may become easier. This means that the tests can vary in length, but are typically shorter than fixed-length tests.

Before starting

Try to take the test as soon as possible after you are invited, so that you can resolve any technical or access issues before the deadline. All queries or

help requests should be submitted at least two working days before this deadline to ensure a response.

Some test taking tips:

- Find a quiet place with no distractions.
- You may wish to have some rough paper, a pen and a calculator to hand.
- Read all test instructions carefully.
- Answer every question – you cannot skip or go back.
- Make sure your internet connection is reliable.
- Try and take the test(s) when you feel calm, although it is natural to feel a little nervous.
- While the tests are not timed, we recommend allowing at least an hour to complete each one.

Practice tests

Before taking the Verbal or Numerical tests, you should get used to what they look like by taking the practice tests, so you are fully familiar.

- [Civil Service Verbal Practice Test](https://EuBusiness.panpowered.com/Civil_Service_Practice/CSVT_practice)
(https://EuBusiness.panpowered.com/Civil_Service_Practice/CSVT_practice)
- [Civil Service Numerical Practice Test](https://EuBusiness.panpowered.com/Civil_Service_Practice/CSNT_practice)
(https://EuBusiness.panpowered.com/Civil_Service_Practice/CSNT_practice)

The practice test is not scored. It is designed to show you the look and feel of the real test while keeping the questions easy to respond to. Taking a practice test can be particularly helpful if you use assistive technology to access web content and want to know if it will work on the real test.

The real test also includes example questions at the beginning of each section.

You can also watch these short videos:

- [Civil Service Verbal Test video](https://youtu.be/SqCdDYoKYr0) (<https://youtu.be/SqCdDYoKYr0>)
- [Civil Service Numerical Test video](https://youtu.be/wYzpZKxJpwo) (<https://youtu.be/wYzpZKxJpwo>)

Test access

If you have applied for a job requiring completion of a test, you can access the relevant test(s) from your Civil Service Jobs application centre.

Tests work on most [modern browsers and operating systems](https://www.gov.uk/help/browsers) (<https://www.gov.uk/help/browsers>) as long as you have a stable internet connection. If your browser isn't supported, the test alerts you to try an

alternative. You can close and re-open the test where you left off, although if possible you should try to complete it in one sitting.

While they should work on smartphones or tablets, our tests work much better on large screen devices - for example laptops or desktop computers. If you don't have your own computer, there are options available - for example your local library.

You must stay connected to the internet for the duration of the test(s). If you lose internet connection, once you are back online you can continue the test where you left off. If you lose the test page, go back to your application centre to re-open it.

Your score and results

The number and difficulty of test questions is used to produce your score, which is compared to a representative group of applicants who have also taken the test.

Your score is presented as a percentile, which tells you how well you performed relative to this group. For example, if your percentile is 44, you scored better than 44% of the group.

All Civil Service jobs are advertised at a particular level. If you pass the test at the minimum required standard for that job level, you will receive a message informing you.

Then, **one** of two things will happen:

- where any additional tests are needed, you will be sent an invitation to complete them, or
- after the test deadline, the recruiter will look at all applicant scores to decide what the job's pass mark will be. They will consider the impact on protected groups, and the number of invitations to the next stage.

The recruiter may decide to raise the pass mark for the job - if so, you will be informed, and you will be told if you have passed or failed at the raised standard.

Meeting the minimum test requirements for a job level is no guarantee of an invite to continue the selection process.

If you do not pass at the minimum required standard for a job level, you can retake the test during any future applications.

Banked scores

If you pass the Verbal or Numerical test at or above the minimum required standard, your score will be “banked” and you will not need to retake the test if you apply for future jobs in the same grade grouping (see grouping explanation, below). This is because your score will be re-used.

If you don't pass, your score will not be banked. You can take the test again for any future jobs you apply for.

When you apply for a job requiring you to take a test, Civil Service Jobs will check if you have an applicable banked test score.

- If you do - you won't be invited to the test.
- If you don't - you will be invited to the test, and must take it.

A banked score will expire when any one of the following conditions is met:

- Six months has passed since the banked score was obtained
- A new score benchmark is applied to the test
- Technical work on the test platform takes place which affects banked scores In these instances, you will need to take the test again.

You can only bank a score on the Verbal or Numerical tests for the grade level group of the job you applied for. For these tests, the grade levels are grouped as follows:

- Administrative Assistant (AA) and Administrative Officer (AO)
- Executive Officer (EO)
- Higher Executive Officer (HEO) and Senior Executive Officer (SEO)
- Grade 7 and Grade 6

This means, for example, that if you apply for an SEO-level job and pass the test, your banked score will also be applicable for any HEO-level jobs you apply for while the banked score remains valid.

Where a Government Department does not have these grades, they will select an appropriate level of test for their vacancy.

If you bank a score on a test, it will not transfer between tests.

Get help

If you lose access during the test, sign in to your application centre to relaunch it. You can launch the test as many times as you need, and this doesn't have to be on the same device.

If you have concerns about any test(s) encounter technical problems, contact your recruitment team - their contact details are in the job advert, or

you can use our general [contact form](#)

(https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/support.cgi?pageaction=contact&gethelp_button=Continue&reqsig_ga=2.127712141.1494874898.1571846989-1319742823.1559074179). Questions about the advertised job should be directed to the contact on the advert.

When you apply, you will have an opportunity to tell us that you need help with your application, such as needing a reasonable adjustment. You can also contact the recruitment team if you need any further help, or you experience accessibility issues. We have a legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments, so please don't be afraid to ask for help if you think you need it. You can read more about this in our [Reasonable Adjustments for Online Tests - a candidate guide page](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reasonable-adjustments-for-online-tests-a-candidate-guide>).

How we use your data

Personal information is held securely in Civil Service Jobs - the test supplier cannot see it, and will only know your name if you choose to share it.

Your information will only be used to support your job application, and evaluate the test's effectiveness.

For more information, see the [Civil Service Jobs Privacy Notice](#) (<https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/index.cgi?pageclass=StandardMessage&display=privacy>).

Published 31 October 2019

Last updated 11 February 2022 [+ show all updates](#)



All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



© Crown copyright