



# Learning pack

**Psychometric assessments in  
recruitment**

# Overview

**Psychometric assessments are used as part of the recruitment process for a wide range of sectors and roles. They are typically not used in isolation but as part of the wider picture of evidence that the recruiter is collecting on you, taken together with other elements of the assessment process. There are two broad groupings of psychometric assessment: *ability tests* (most frequently used) and *personality questionnaires*.**



# Ability tests

**Ability or aptitude tests look at how you reason with complex numerical, verbal or spatial information. Tests are administered under timed exam conditions. Most use a multiple choice format, with one right answer to each question.**

Within a recruitment situation, ability tests are used as an objective means of assessing specific aptitudes which are relevant to the job for which you are being considered. The results of the ability test are compared to those of a 'norm group' (such as other managers and professionals) so that a relative assessment of performance can be made.

## What assessments am I likely to come across?

There are a variety of test publishers. Examples of commonly used test publishers are **Saville**, **SHL** and **Cubiks**.

## How can I prepare?

Extensive practice is not necessary and does not correlate with continually improved performance. However, you will be better able to approach the tests confidently and with a positive mindset if you do prepare.

Make use of practice tests to get familiar with the format of the test, the types of questions you will be asked and the general process of taking these types of tests.

However, many of the practice tests available on the web are shorter and easier than the real tests. Taking account of this, we have partnered with [GraduatesFirst](#) to provide extensive additional practice resources. You can link to the resource via the careers intranet and register at the site using your Cranfield University email address. This will enable you to take advantage of:

- Full verbal, numerical and logical reasoning tests - seven of each.
- Full feedback on each test you complete, including explanations of the correct answers; feedback on speed versus accuracy and tips for improving your performance.
- A full situational judgement test, again with explanations of the correct answers.

Also look at the practice tests available on the publishers' websites, eg:

SHL - [www.shl.com/shldirect/en/practice-tests](http://www.shl.com/shldirect/en/practice-tests)

Saville - [www.savilleassessment.com/practice-preparation-advice-for-candidates](http://www.savilleassessment.com/practice-preparation-advice-for-candidates)

Cubiks - [practicetests.cubiks.com](http://practicetests.cubiks.com)

In addition, Mark Parkinson's website has a very comprehensive list of practice tests and questionnaires freely available [markparkinson.co.uk/psychometric\\_links.htm](http://markparkinson.co.uk/psychometric_links.htm)

Finally, the libraries have a number of good books, such as Mike Byron's *The Graduate Psychometric Test Workbook* and Barrett's *How to Pass Advanced Aptitude Tests*, and many more on numerical and verbal reasoning.

You can further prepare for numerical tests by brushing up on your basic maths, with and without a calculator: percentages, times tables, fractions and ratios. Examining and interpreting charts, graphs and tables in the business sections of newspapers and magazines can also be effective.

You can further prepare for verbal tests by reading books, newspapers and reports in the target language, especially the business sections of newspapers. Completing crosswords and IQ-style puzzles helps to focus on word meaning and interpretation.



## How should I approach the test?

Listen carefully to all instructions including the time allowed to complete the test.

All tests will start with example questions. Make sure you understand the answers to these and ask for a repetition of the instructions if these are unclear to you.

In most cases, it is important to work as quickly and accurately as possible. Negative marking is unusual and therefore it is usually preferable to make an 'educated guess' rather than missing out a question.

Remember that managerial-level tests are developed to be challenging so you may well not finish the tests and you are highly unlikely to get 100%. Questions get progressively harder. If you get stuck on a question, eliminate any options you can, make an 'educated guess' and move on.

## Should I approach online tests differently?

Treat online tests in the same way as pen-and-pencil tests. Find somewhere quiet and ensure you will not be interrupted. If you can choose when to take the test, do so at the time of day when you work best: do not leave it until the evening when you are tired as quick thinking is required.

Be aware that you may be asked to redo a similar test if your application is taken forward to ensure that you personally completed the online test.

## How can I use the feedback?

It is worth seeking feedback on your ability test results. This will enable you to identify your stronger and weaker areas (numerical, verbal or abstract) and may give you a speed/accuracy breakdown which will help you to prepare for future tests.



# Personality assessments

**Personality assessments provide information about how you are likely to behave in a given situation. The questionnaires are descriptive, illustrating how or why you may do things rather than your ability. Questions relate to different aspects of your personality, such as your working style, how you interact with other people and what motivates you. There are no right or wrong answers, and you cannot pass or fail.**

Within a recruitment situation, employers are likely to use your results as a starting point for discussing your experiences and interests in an interview. Although assessors are not looking for a specific profile, certain characteristics are related to the competencies required for the job. They are used to suggest the likely fit between you and the job or organisation.

## What assessments am I likely to come across?

There are a wide range of personality assessments used within a recruitment setting. Two frequently used measures are:

Talent Q Dimensions ([www.trytalentq.com](http://www.trytalentq.com))  
SHL Occupational Personality Questionnaire ([www.cebglobal.com/talent-management/talent-assessment/assessments/shl-opq.html](http://www.cebglobal.com/talent-management/talent-assessment/assessments/shl-opq.html))

## How can I prepare?

You cannot prepare or revise for a personality assessment, other than developing your self-awareness. You can familiarise yourself with what is involved by looking at the websites for the assessments to reduce any anxiety you are feeling.

## How should I respond?

Be honest with your answers: the best advice is to feel positive about yourself and your suitability for the job. Do not try to guess the answer the company is looking for or to present yourself as someone you are not. It is in your own interest to know whether you really are suited to the job. The questionnaires are designed to identify inconsistent responses to reveal 'faking' and information from elsewhere in the recruitment process (interviews, group exercises) will also reveal any discrepancies.

There are no time limits. Work through the questions reasonably quickly, do not over-analyse and go with your first instinct. Do not be distracted if items seem similar or even the same.

## How can I use the feedback?

You should be given the opportunity to receive feedback on your profile. If this is not offered, you can ask the assessment co-ordinator how to go about receiving feedback. This will be useful whether or not you are offered the job as it will provide information on how your personality may affect the way you work and your work preferences.

**Remember, before all assessments have a good night's sleep and make sure you are feeling alert and focused on the day.**

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