Psychometric Tests

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Psychometric tests are designed to measure various aspects of a person's skills, abilities and personality.

Why and when are psychometric tests used?

Psychometric tests are carefully designed and trialled to provide reliable, valid and fair measures of what they are supposed to be measuring. Your results can be compared with a sample of others taking the test. The tests are usually timed and always administered, marked and scored in the same way as set out by the test designers. The two main types of test are those of **Ability or Aptitude** and those of **Personality**.

Psychometric tests are increasingly used by employers as an early selection method, often as part of their online application.

They may be used

- Online as part of the initial application to narrow the field when there are a large number of applications
- Alongside a first interview so the company can make an informed and unbiased decision based on your abilities
- At a later stage, as part of an assessment centre or perhaps at interview.

What kinds of tests are there?

Ability or Aptitude Tests
Ability or aptitude tests measure either general or particular skills. They are usually timed and carried out under exam conditions. This category of test can include:

- **Numerical reasoning tests** : to assess how well you interpret data, graphs or charts, and can test basic arithmetic
- **Verbal reasoning tests**; to assess how well you understand written information and evaluate arguments and statements
- **Non-verbal reasoning tests**: to assess your spatial awareness and how well you follow diagrammatic information, spot patterns.
- **Logical reasoning tests**: to assess how well you follow through to a conclusion given basic information, or using your current knowledge or experience.

Situational Judgement Tests
Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs) are a type of ability test that assess judgement required for solving problems in work-related situations.

Personality Tests or Inventories
Personality tests are designed to assess your typical behaviour when presented with different situations and your preferred way of going about things.

Aptitude/Ability Tests – Top Tips

You may be asked to undertake different kinds of tests depending on the kind of information you would come across in your daily work.

- For numerical tests, it may be worth refreshing your basic mathematical skills; remind yourself of fundamental calculations such as ratios, fractions and percentages.
- Questions are often based on your ability to interpret data from charts, graphs and tables. Have a look at The Financial Times or a similar journal to become familiar with reading tables of information.
- Try to practice estimating
- Do not worry about more advanced mathematics such as algebra or equations. These will not be tested unless the employer specifies this.
- Verbal tests are more difficult to improve easily but the majority will include comprehension exercises; reading articles and then answering questions based on what you have read. To prepare consider reading articles on subjects you have no prior knowledge of.
- Practice summarising complicated articles or extracting the main points.
- You could read friends' text books or magazines such as 'The Economist' or 'Computer Weekly'.
- To prepare for logical reasoning tests consider doing numerical puzzles such as Sudoku which are good at helping you recognise number patterns.

Situational Judgement Tests

This type of test presents hypothetical situations that employees might encounter at work. In response to each situation, candidates are presented with several possible actions (in multiple choice format) that could be taken when dealing with the problem described. Most commonly you will asked be to select both the most effective and the least effective response to the situation described. However, some tests may ask you to pick only the most effective response, or to list the responses in order of effectiveness.

Personality Tests – Top Tips

They can then be used to see how likely you are to fit into a role, such as a management position, or company culture.

- Be yourself. You will not know exactly what personality types employers are looking for; often they are looking for a range of personality types. Most of the tests contain tests that will highlight inconsistencies in your approach.
- There are not usually obviously right or wrong answers in personality questionnaires.
- Put yourself into a professional mind set when you answer the questions and try to think about work based situations when answering.
- Although many personality type tests are not timed, it is better to go with your first reaction to the questions rather than spending too much time thinking about their meaning.
- Try some practice tests in advance to see what types of questions are asked as some can be confusing the first time you see them.

Useful Links

These websites have examples of tests and advice:

- www.shldirect.com *includes verbal, numerical, inductive reasoning, accuracy and motivation tests*
- www.kenexa.com/assessments/assessment_guidance *verbal and logical reasoning tests*
- www.assessmentday.co.uk *has sample numerical, verbal and inductive reasoning tests along with 'how to answer' sections.*
- www.peoplemaps.com *has personality reports*
- www.psychometric-success.com   *has a range of tests*
- www.targetjobs.co.uk/careers-report *is a career planning tool that also includes verbal reasoning, numerical and logical thinking tests*
- https://www.savilleconsulting.com/products/aptitude-preparation-guides-and-advice *has preparation guides for all types of tests*
- www.wikijob.co.uk *has various reasoning tests*

Preparing for Psychometric Tests

Preparation is vital for success in psychometric tests.

- Practising the types of questions you will be asked in tests will make you aware of how they are structured and what is expected of you.
- There are a number of websites that have practice tests available and some give feedback.
- There are some practice leaflets available from the Employability and Careers Centres for a small charge and reference books that you can use to practice.
- The Employability and Careers Service organises regular practice test sessions allowing you to complete a full set of verbal, numerical and diagrammatic reasoning tests under exam conditions and gain full one to one feedback on your result.
- If you have a disability and require special provisions or adjustments, such as extra time, contact the employer about this as far in advance of the test as possible. If it is part of the application procedure online, contact the employer before completing the test.
- Most tests will have some practice questions at the start. Make sure you understand these thoroughly before the test starts.
- Read the instructions carefully before you start.
- You need to be both quick and accurate, so try to ensure that you are working slow enough to avoid wrong answers, but fast enough to get through as many of the questions as possible.
- If you get truly stuck on a question, press on to the next question and come back to the question later if you have time.
- If you are not sure about an answer put down your best guess and move on. However, avoid wild guessing as some tests are negatively marked meaning that marks are taken off for wrong answers.
- Some times the questions get harder as you go along, so don't worry if the later questions take longer to answer.
- If you are taking the tests away from the employers office, for example as part of the online application, ensure you are sat somewhere suitable where there will be no interruptions as you cannot usually pause or restart the tests once you have started.
- It is also very important that you have a reliable internet connection when taking the test.