Careers Service guide to...

Psychometric Tests Explained

Many employers use psychometric tests in the graduate selection process. There are two main types of psychometric assessment used in the selection process, Aptitude Tests and Personality Tests.

Aptitude Tests:

The most commonly used tests are Verbal and Numerical Reasoning though you may also come across others such as abstract or diagrammatic reasoning tests, often used to assess your logic and visual thinking skills.

These tests, also known as ability tests, are used in the selection process to measure specific job relevant abilities and aptitudes. They are not general knowledge tests. Aptitude and ability sound alike, but are subtly different. You may have the necessary experience to enable you to complete a task, but not an aptitude for it. Aptitude is more about having a natural talent - even if it's not yet developed.

The theory is that if you do well in the tests then you are likely to perform well in job tasks that require these abilities or aptitudes.

Normally tests are administered online near the beginning of the application process, often prior to a first interview while other companies use them later in the recruitment process, as part of an assessment centre or second interview programme.

If you are tested online prior to a first interview there may be a fixed score you have to reach in order to proceed to the next recruitment stage. Different employers have different cut off points and while you may not be told how you scored on a particular test you should not assume that if you do not pass one test that you will automatically be unsuccessful in other tests.

Questions are usually multiple choice, have definite "right" and "wrong" answers, and are strictly timed. Preparation is the key to success with aptitude tests.

Sitting aptitude tests: tips for success

- Know what to expect and prepare in advance by using the practice tests links provided.
- If being tested in an assessment centre, arrive in good time at the test location
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand something.
- If being tested online, use a computer in a quiet area where you can concentrate and will not be disturbed.
- Take the time to work through any practice questions before the test itself begins.
- Pay careful attention to the instructions.
- Work as quickly and as accurately as you can but avoid wild guessing.
- Skip over any questions you get stuck on. You may have time to go back to them at the end.
- Don't double or triple check each answer. Go back at the end if you have time but don't worry if you do not finish all the questions in the time.
- Brush up on your arithmetic – percentages, ratios, square roots (you may not be allowed a calculator).
- Go to Resources and Practice Test links for more information

GCU Glasgow Caledonian University

www.gcu.ac.uk/careers

Personality Tests:

How successful you will be in a job depends not only on your abilities, but also on your personal qualities. Personality questionnaires are used to see how you react to different situations which you may meet in the workplace.

Tests focus on a variety of factors such as: how you relate to other people; your ability to deal with your own and others' emotions; your motivation and determination, and your general outlook as a way of trying to assess your personal work style. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, instead the questionnaire generates a profile of you highlighting your personal qualities and characteristics. While the questionnaires are untimed you will be expected to complete reasonably quickly.

Selectors will not be looking for a rigid "typical" personality profile, although certain characteristics will be more or less appropriate for that particular job (e.g. independence, social confidence and persuasiveness are important characteristics for sales staff). You may receive feedback on the profile and occasionally it might form the basis for discussion at a subsequent interview. Not all companies will use personality tests in the graduate recruitment programme.

You cannot practice for these tests but you should answer honestly and positively.

Sitting Personality Tests: tips for success

- Answer as your 'workplace' self, as straight-forwardly as you can - don't try to second-guess what selectors are looking for.
- Remember that personality questionnaires usually contain some questions to ensure consistency and identify if people are trying to 'mould' themselves to the organisation

Special Arrangements

If English is not your first language or if you have a disability which might make taking a test difficult (such as visual impairment or dyslexia) do let the employer know in advance so that they can discuss your situation and decide if any special arrangements are required.

Resources

Reference books:

The books listed below are available to borrow from the library and a reference copy is available from the careers resource area, in M015, if marked *.

- Bryon, Mike: How to Pass the Civil Service Qualifying Tests 3rd Edition, 9780749448530.*
- Bryon, Mike: How to Pass Selection Tests, 0749426977 (also available as an Ebook, 9780749443740).
- Bryon, Mike: The Ultimate Psychometric Test Book, 0749444584.
- Hodgson, Susan: Brilliant Tactics to Pass Aptitude Tests 2nd Edition, 9780273714941.*
- Moutafi, J et al: Perfect Psychometric Test Results, 9781905211678.*
- Moutafi, J et al: Perfect Numerical Test Results, 9781905211333.
- Parkinson, Mark: How to Master Psychometric Tests 4th Edition, 9780749451653.*
- Povah & Povah: Succeeding at Assessment Centres for Dummies, 9780470721018.*
- Shavick, Andrea: Management Level Psychometric and Assessment Tests, 1845280288.
- Shavick, Andrea: Practice Psychometric Tests, 1845280202.
- Tolley & Thomas: How to Pass Verbal Reasoning Tests, available as an electronic journal article through Athens.
- Wood & Tolley : How to Succeed at an Assessment Centre, 0749444215.

Practice Test Links

The following websites have information on aptitude tests and practice tests:

- Psychological Testing Centre – informative guide managed by the British Psychological Society including a test takers section: http://www.psychtesting.org.uk/
- Prospects Web – link to Test Yourself pages which include online tests, self-assessment exercises and an explanation of psychometric testing in graduate recruitment: http://www.prospects.ac.uk/psychometric_tests.htm
- Target Jobs – psychometric tests explained with practical tips and advice: http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/psychometric-tests
- Civil Service Fast Stream – sample e-tray exercise: http://faststream.civilservice.gov.uk/How-do-I-apply/
- Saville & Holdsworth – test producer providing practice tests: http://www.shldirect.com/
- Team Technology – an introduction to the Myers Briggs tests and a chance to work out your own score/personality type: http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk/
- Assessment Day – sample numerical, verbal and inductive reasoning tests: http://www.assessmentday.co.uk/
- Top Employers – numeracy reasoning test: http://www.topemployers.co.uk/
- European Personnel selection Office – sample selection tests: http://europa.eu/epso/discover/index_en.htm#
- Diagonal Thinking Tests – online tool to aid recruitment in the advertising and communications industries, testing both linear and lateral thought: http://www.diagonalthinking.co.uk/
- University of Kent Careers Service – links to various free online sample tests - http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/psychotests.htm
- Realise Potential – information and advice for test takers from a well-respected firm of occupational psychologists: http://www.realisepotential.com/FAQTestTakers.html