

## Psychometric Assessments

### What are they?

Psychometric assessments are powerful tools used by organisations for the selection, development and management of people. Assessments can be used:

- To enhance the decision making process in assessment for recruitment and selection and promotion,
- As an aid to management in areas such as motivation and team building, and
- To identify development needs, as a basis for employee counseling as well as in organisational areas such as management of change or succession planning.

Psychometric assessments provide additional relevant information over and above that obtained from more traditional assessment methods. For instance, assessments aid recruitment processes by ensuring that all candidates are treated fairly and measured against a common yardstick.

Assessments can be used to challenge stereotyped judgements made by interviewers and often enable a more objective analysis to take place than is possible by interviewing alone.

Using psychometric assessments can lead to substantial gains for an organisation in terms of increased output and efficiency, better quality staff, higher morale, more effective performance, lower training costs and reduced turnover.

When properly used, it helps ensure a common language for assessment standards throughout an organisation, match people to jobs, identify individual capabilities and predict on-the-job performance.

### Types of Psychometric Tests

1. Ability Tests
2. Personality Inventories

#### **1. Ability Tests**

Ability tests are designed to assess innate abilities, for example, numeracy, verbal reasoning, spatial awareness and logic. They consist of a number of questions with multiple choice answers, only one of which is right.

You will find that the words and numbers used will relate to the type of job or course you are applying for. Thus for technical tests the majority of the words in the verbal; section will be of a technical nature. Abstract reasoning, spatial reasoning and mechanical ability tests are also frequently included in the battery of tests.

As you proceed through the tests, the questions may become more difficult. Tests are designed so that very few people finish the test in the time allowed. Your score is then compared with how other people have done in the test in the past.

## **2. Personality Inventories**

Personality questionnaires are self-report questionnaires, which means that a profile is drawn up from your responses to a number of questions or statements. These focus on a variety of personality factors such as:

- How you relate to other people
- Your workstyle
- Your ability to deal with your own and others emotions
- Your motivations and determinations
- Your general outlook to life

Unlike aptitude tests there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and personality questionnaires are usually administered without time limitations. The main stable characteristic that personality questionnaires aim to identify and measure are

- Extroversion/Introversion
- Tough minded/Tender minded
- Independent/Dependent
- High self-confidence/Low self-confidence

They are based on the assumption that the responses will be representative of how an individual will react in a given social situation, particularly the one in which the selector is interested, i.e. the organization or department in which that individual may be working. The best way to approach a personality questionnaire is just to answer them as honestly as you can.

### **How to prepare for psychometric tests**

Candidates who have had lots of experience of selection tests have an advantage over a candidate who faces a test for the first time.

However education is the best preparation for a psychometric test as there is always a basic mental arithmetic component.

It is essential that the material on which you practice is similar to the questions which occur in the real test. The employer should have sent you a description of the test with examples of the types of question which comprise the real test. Study these examples carefully.

## Two types of practice should be undertaken if the maximum benefit is to be gained

1. Practice without time constraint and in an informal relaxed situation. The aim of this kind of practice is that you realise the demands of the questions, understand how to approach them and gain speed and confidence in your ability to answer them
2. Practice on realistic questions against strict time constraint and under realistic test conditions. Ideally you should practice on mock tests. The aim of this type of practice is that you get used to answering the questions under the time constraints and conditions of the test. It helps you to avoid mistakes which result from the pressure of the situation.

If you have verbal and numerical reasoning tests coming up it's good to increase your mental agility and get yourself into the habit of recognising word and number patterns through some simple activities.

- **Get back to the basics of maths:** Numerical tests don't require advanced algebra: revising some GCSE-level maths should provide what you need. Revise how to read information presented graphically and brush up on percentages, ratios and probability.
- **Do number puzzles:** Number puzzles like Sudoku are good for helping you recognise number patterns.
- **Add, subtract, multiply and divide... in your head:** When you're at the shops try adding up a few items in your head. Or at least try to get a good estimate of what your trolley-load will cost.
- **Think about meaning:** When you read news stories, think about what statements really mean, and how they could be interpreted.
- **Do word puzzles:** Never has there been a better excuse for frittering away time on the Saturday morning crossword.
- **Be aware of commonly misspelt words:** Most English grammar books and websites have lists of commonly misspelt or 'confusable' words, e.g. 'its' and 'it's', or 'complement' and 'compliment'. Check you are also aware of the English spellings of words such as liaise, favourite and organise.

### How much practice?

You should aim to do between 12-21 hours of practice, or a minimum of three realistic mock tests. The benefit of practice is short lived so you need to start close to when you have the test and continue right up to the day before your test.

### The day of the test session

- Keep calm
- Get a good nights sleep the night before
- Eat normally
- Exercise to reduce stress
- Arrive at the test venue early
- Listen carefully to the assessors instructions,
- Ask questions if you require clarification,
- Record your answers in the correct way
- Don't agonise over a question you can't do, move onto the next one

- If you can't work out an answer make an informed guess
- Don't waste time double checking answers
- Work quickly, but don't race to avoid making errors
- Keep an eye on the time
- Take some deep breaths
- Keep a cool head

**Examples of Psychometric Assessments include (but are not limited to):**

- Verbal Reasoning
- Verbal Comprehension
- Cognitive Ability
- Numerical Reasoning
- Mechanical Comprehension
- Inductive Reasoning
- Logical Reasoning
- Non-Verbal Reasoning
- Vocabulary Test
- Deductive Reasoning

**Sample Psychometric Assessments – On Line Link**

**1. SHLDirect.com**

<http://www.shldirect.com>

SHLDirect.com is a unique portfolio of practical information and services designed to help you understand the types of assessment processes that employers use for recruitment and development. The site offers access to useful hints and tips, and the opportunity to experience for free a range of ability tests and personality questionnaires, enabling you to practise and prepare yourself for the real thing.

Log onto the website to access the following:

- **Example Questions** – Take a look at a number of examples explaining how to prepare for the tests.
- **Practice Tests** – Prepare yourself by practising tests. They are also available in different languages.
- **Assessment Advice** – Get advice on assessment techniques.

**2. Psychometric Success**

[www.psychometric-success.com/downloads/download-practice-tests.htm](http://www.psychometric-success.com/downloads/download-practice-tests.htm)

- Go to the practice paper on this page and click on whichever aptitude test you wish to do.
- Then go halfway down the page that opens and “click” on download.

- The easiest thing to do is print off the download, follow the test's instructions and afterwards you can look at the last page and compare your answers.

### **3. Other Tests**

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/psychotests.htm>

<http://www.practicetests.co.uk/>

<https://www.quora.com/How-do-I-prepare-for-aptitude-tests-for-placements>

<https://freedu.in/qb/578/>

[www.careers.ie](http://www.careers.ie) (Paid & practice aptitude tests)

#### **Practice Tests for Maritime Industry**

[www.hogrefe.co.uk](http://www.hogrefe.co.uk)

**(Also see our Assessment Centre Factsheet for further info)**