



Careers Service

Psychometric Tests Used In Selection

WHAT ARE PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS?

Psychometric tests are objective measures by which employers can assess the potential of individuals to help them select the right candidates for jobs. The two main ways that employers generally use psychometrics are ability/aptitude testing and personality questionnaires. Traditionally psychometric tests are used at an interview or assessment centre. In this case the results form only part of the final selection process and are interpreted together with all the other information collected about candidates. However, on-line testing is becoming more common, and is being used at an earlier stage alongside on-line applications, to filter out unsuitable candidates. Success in on-line tests and on-line applications will lead to invitations to interviews and assessment centres.

Whether tests take place at an employer's premises or on-line, employers should make it very clear what you have to do and the nature of the test, before you begin. For on-line tests, make sure that you are relaxed, have read all the instructions on screen and have tried the on-line examples, if available. Before you begin the test ensure that you have all the resources you need and will not be disturbed. Any employer using tests should give you notice, and prior to any testing session will probably provide you with practice examples.

• THE TWO MAIN TYPES OF PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS IN SELECTION

- Ability/Aptitude Tests
- Personality/Interest Questionnaires

APTITUDE TESTS

Aptitude tests aim to assess specific abilities and are made up of a set number of questions that are to be answered in a given amount of time. The types of aptitude test you are most likely to come across are Verbal Reasoning, Numerical Reasoning and Diagrammatic Reasoning with the possibility of (for certain occupations, if appropriate) Mechanical and Spatial ability and Manual Dexterity also being tested.

Verbal Reasoning is about your ability to understand and reason with written information, while Numerical Reasoning refers to your ability to understand and reason with data presented in various numerical formats. Additionally you may encounter Diagrammatic Reasoning tests which assess your ability to reason with abstract information presented in the form of symbols and diagrams. There is also a trend among some employers to use Critical Reasoning tests. These are designed to find out how well you are able to work out problems analytically and logically.

The Careers Service provides some online practice tests called 'Profiling for Success'. For details of how to access these, please ask at the Careers Service, or visit the Psychometric Tests section of <http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob>

We also run practice test sessions using three tests (verbal, numerical and diagrammatic reasoning) which are similar to those used by many employers. There is a small charge to cover the cost of materials and pre-booking is essential.

PERSONALITY QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires are used by employers to help gain a picture of how people match different jobs. They are concerned with people's typical or preferred ways of behaving, such as the way they relate to others, or the way they approach and solve problems. Such questionnaires explore the broad range of personality characteristics that are generally relevant to the world of work. For employers the benefit of such questionnaires is that the same carefully designed and fully researched questions are asked of all

people and their answers are captured in a fair and consistent way. When used with other forms of assessment they can help to ensure a more thorough exploration of how well a person is suited to a particular job and how they will fit into the existing workforce.

The Careers Service provides access to 'Profiling for Success' with two online personality type indicators. For details of how to access these, please ask at the Careers Service, or visit the Psychometric Tests section of <http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob>
The Careers Service also runs sessions using Myers Briggs Type Indicator, which will provide you with a deeper insight into your personality type. There is a small charge to cover the cost of materials and pre-booking is essential.

WHY DO EMPLOYERS USE PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS?

- To measure a talent/skill or the potential to acquire it
- To measure the intellectual capacity for logical thinking and reasoning
- To establish or confirm an applicant's competence for a job
- To compare objectively one candidate's performance with norm levels for a similar population
- To use them as a reliable predictor of how well an individual is likely to perform in the job

HOW TO MASTER PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS

If you think that you are likely to encounter some form of psychometric testing when you are job hunting it is wise to be as prepared as possible (as with any other part of how you present yourself to employers).

Help from the Careers Service

- Our 'What's On' events include a talk each semester on psychometric tests. In addition, we provide free access to the online 'Profiling for Success' assessments (see 'Aptitude Tests' on the previous page). We also run practice aptitude test sessions and the opportunity to complete the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (a personality inventory). For both of these practical sessions, a small charge is made to cover the cost of materials and pre-booking is necessary. Experienced advisers run the sessions and feedback is given. Please ask for more details at the Careers Service or check the What's On programme at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/events>

Prior to a test session...

- Before attending any psychometric test session make sure that you know which type of tests are to be used i.e. aptitude tests and/or personality inventories
- Prior to the tests check whether any practice sheets are available
- For numerical tests, if you have not studied maths for some time, it is a good idea to spend some time brushing up on some of the basic calculations such as percentages and fractions, and familiarising yourself with using a calculator
- For verbal tests, if you are not used to reading complicated texts that test your comprehension, you could practice by reading friends' text books, or reading quality newspapers or magazines with well argued articles
- If there are any factors which are likely to affect your performance e.g. if English is not your first language or if you are dyslexic, make sure that your test administrator knows in advance
- Psychometric tests can be made available in various alternative formats for people with a disability eg. large print, Braille but prior notice of your requirements is necessary

• On the day...

- Make sure that you arrive promptly. Latecomers will not be admitted once the formal administration of a test has started
- Make full use of the practice exercises at the beginning of each test. If you have questions, make sure you ask them at this stage
- Pay full attention to the test instructions in all aptitude tests
- Answer the questions in the test using the information provided, not any prior knowledge you may have about the topic
- Check if negative marking is being used

- If in doubt as to whether it is permissible to use calculators, ASK
- Pay careful attention to the time allocation. It is quite common for candidates not to complete all the questions in the test, but you must aim to work as quickly and as accurately as you can in the time allowed
- Read each question carefully before answering. Try to avoid making silly mistakes and do not spend too long on any one question
- In face-to-face tests, make sure that the number of the question you are answering on the answer sheet matches the question number in the booklet, especially if you have omitted any questions
- Try not to be overawed by the formal nature of the test, or to be panicked by the time pressure
- In personality questionnaires, there are usually no time restrictions and there are no specifically right or wrong answers. Try to answer as honestly as possible. Avoid giving what you feel is the 'socially desirable' answer or the answer you imagine the employer wants. Be as accurate (and honest) as possible. Many questionnaires have an inbuilt mechanism to check for honesty and consistency in the replies
- Don't worry if some of the questions in personality questionnaires do not seem relevant
- **After the test session.....**
- If you have completed an aptitude test you should receive some form of feedback
- If a personality inventory has been used, the way in which you answered the questions will often indicate the strength of certain personality traits; your preferred way of relating to other people; and your approach to problem solving. This may well form the basis for some of the questions asked at a subsequent interview
- You will have undergone the experience of psychometric testing and become familiar with what is expected. Familiarity can help increase your confidence in sitting tests and make you feel less nervous if you repeat the process

FURTHER INFORMATION

Useful web sites include:

The Careers Service website <http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob> has a section on Psychometric Tests including further information on the 'Profiling for Success' online practice tests and personality type indicators

SHL Direct (publisher of tests) <http://www.shldirect.com> normally includes example questions and online practice tests with feedback

Civil Service Fast Stream <http://www.faststream.gov.uk> see 'How Do I Apply?' and 'Step- Self-Assessment tests by-step application process'

Keirsey Temperament Tests <http://www.keirsey.com> and click on Kiersey Temperament Sorter-II which aims to help people discover their personality type

Reference books in the Careers Service (some available on loan)

How to pass graduate psychometric tests – M.Bryon

How to pass advanced numeracy tests – M.Bryon

Graduate psychometric tests – M.Bryon

Psychometric tests for graduates – A.Shavick

How to pass technical selection tests – M.Bryon and S.Modha