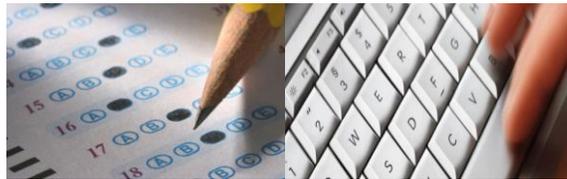


# Helping your candidates to prepare for psychometric assessments



The chances are that, as a recruiter, your candidates either have or will come across online or offline psychometric tests as part of your clients' selection processes.

This guide helps to de-mystify the process for you and your candidates and contains useful hints and tips, which will help your candidates to prepare, do justice to themselves and to give of their best in those all-important tests and questionnaires.

## What are psychometric tests?

The term Psychometric literally means “measurement of the mind”.

Psychometric tests are standardised exercises which compare the responses from the candidate taking the exercise with those derived from lots of other people with similar backgrounds to themselves.

The most commonly used psychometric exercises for recruitment include:

- Personality questionnaires
- Ability tests.

## What are personality questionnaires?

*Personality questionnaires* are not strictly speaking tests. They come in two main formats:

- Those which give lots of statements about working life and ask the candidate whether he or she agrees or disagrees with each of the statements in turn. An example might be: “*I enjoy leading meetings*”.
- Those which give blocks of statements, and the candidate has to pick ONE statement which is most like him / her, and ONE which is least like him / her.

An example block of statements might be:

Pick ONE Most like	Pick ONE least like	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I look forward to the future with optimism
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am a creative problem-solver
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I am competitive in everything I do

## What are ability tests?

*Ability tests* are normally timed and have right and wrong answers. These assess a candidate’s ability in different areas.

For supervisory, graduate, managerial and professional roles, these tests often include verbal reasoning and numerical reasoning.

For skilled, craft and technician roles, these tests can include mechanical reasoning, spatial awareness and fault finding.

### **How are psychometric exercises administered?**

Traditionally this was via a paper-and-pencil format with a qualified administrator introducing and explaining the test process and invigilating as the exercises are taken.

This still occurs, but online assessment is becoming more and more widespread.

Sometimes the exercises can be completed online by the candidate remotely at a time and place of their choosing (such as at home). On other occasions candidates are invited to take the exercises on a PC at the client's premises, or even at your premises.

### **Why do clients like using tests?**

Well-designed, well-administered exercises provide very objective and accurate information on a candidate's strengths and development areas.

They are often used for screening out candidates, to save time and money later in the process, before or in conjunction with the interviewing stage.

Sometimes they are used after final interview stage, if a client cannot decide between two or more candidates or if a client wants to know more about their final chosen candidate(s).

**What are some of the most common pitfalls facing candidates when taking psychometric assessments?**

***When taking personality assessments.....***

**X** They regard the exercise incorrectly as a test and try to pick what they think are the “right” and “wrong” answers or to second-guess what the client is looking for

**X** They spend too long analysing the statements or, while taking the exercise, try to cross-reference their later responses to earlier responses given.

***When taking ability tests.....***

**X** Not reading the questions carefully enough – particularly important in critical reasoning tests

**X** Rushing the questions

**X** Spending too long over questions

**X** Being a bit rusty on basic numerical concepts – particularly important in numerical critical reasoning tests

**X** Not keeping an eye on the time when taking a timed test

**X** Not having the right equipment such as a watch, reading glasses or a calculator with which they are familiar.

***When taking assessments online at home.....***

- X** Doing the exercises late at night when tired
  
- X** Getting interruptions when taking the exercises
  
- X** Being tempted to get their mates to help with answering the questions.

**What can I do as a recruiter to help?**

*Before your candidates take reasoning tests.....*

- ✓** Encourage them to brush up on their number skills, particularly using graphs, charts, tables, ratios, proportions and fractions, if taking numerical tests
  
- ✓** Share the test practice web sites at the back of this document with them and encourage them to complete practice tests for the sorts of exercises which they are likely to encounter
  
- ✓** Get them to read books on preparing for tests
  
- ✓** They need to read the test instructions carefully and to ask if anything is unclear
  
- ✓** They should try to get the balance right between answering as many questions as they can, but to avoid rushing the test or getting so focused on completing the test that accuracy of working suffers
  
- ✓** Avoid just guessing answers, in case penalty points are awarded. Some tests look at the accuracy of the candidate's work as well as how many questions they got right.

*Before your candidates take any personality assessments.....*

- ✓ Strongly discourage them from trying to second-guess the “right” answers – it is not a test; inconsistent or unrealistic responses will get picked up in the way the exercise is designed
- ✓ Treat each statement, or block of statements, on its own merits; think about what you are like now, and how you would normally behave if at work.

*If your candidates plan to complete any assessments at home online.....*

- ✓ Remind them that they may well be asked to re-take any tests later in a supervised or controlled setting, a common technique to guard against cheating
- ✓ Advise them not to leave taking the exercises to the last minute
- ✓ Advise them to arrange a good test-taking environment for themselves, free from noise and interruptions. Consider if it is practical for the candidates to be invited to your offices to take the exercises, where a better environment might be achieved.

*After your candidates take the assessments.....*

- ✓ Find out how they fared. If, for example, the candidate found the reasoning tests harder than expected, get them to re-visit the tips and suggestions for preparation
- ✓ If they took the exercises remotely, check if they experienced any technical problems or unexpected disturbances during the online assessment process, so you can explore if the session can be re-set / re-arranged with the client’s permission.

## **About Informed Assessment**

*In essence, we help our clients to arrive at informed, objective decisions about whom to appoint - and how to help those people to develop - through the use of fair and rigorous selection processes and assessment exercises and activities.*

*Informed Assessment specialises in:*

- *Assessment for selection - using online psychometric assessment, face-to-face psychometric assessment and Assessment Centre techniques*
- *Assessment for development – helping individuals and teams to develop through facilitating Development Centres and team development programmes*
- *Associated training in such areas as recruitment and selection skills.*

**For more information on our services for recruiters, candidates and clients, please contact us on 0845 606 6798 or via [info@informedassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@informedassessment.co.uk)**

## Test taker's guide to some useful websites

There are some useful websites for test takers to check out on the internet. Also use Google and enter words like “psychometric”, “psychometrics” and “aptitude tests” to keep abreast of relevant new sites.

<http://www.shl.com>

Click on “try a test” (on the right of the screen) and follow the options.

<http://morrisby.com>

Click on “Practice questions” under “Individuals” for a sequence of practice tests covering different ability areas.

<http://psychometrics.co.uk>

This website has a comprehensive download giving verbal and numerical test practice questions. Click on “Practice psychometric tests”.

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

This site provides graduate level verbal, numerical and diagrammatic test questions but you may need to pay a fee.

<http://psychometric-success.com>

This website also has plenty of information plus free, downloadable practice tests as well as test questions to buy.

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

This is a University site so the exercises are of graduate level.

[http://www.savilleconsulting.com/products/aptitude\\_preparationguides.aspx](http://www.savilleconsulting.com/products/aptitude_preparationguides.aspx)

There are several downloadable guides available on preparing for verbal, numerical and diagrammatic tests.