

Psychometric tests

What is a psychometric test?

Psychometric literally means measurement of the mind, psycho = mind and metric = measurement.

Psychometric tests are standardised tests designed by psychologists to measure mental performance; they help to identify your potential and personality.

Why are psychometric tests used?

Psychometric Assessment has a variety of uses, but most typically is used to assist the appropriate selection of people applying for a role. In addition to giving employers useful information about a candidate's suitability for a position, assessment can also be a valuable tool for employers wanting to make decisions about promotions, individual's development needs and team dynamics within an organisation. The tests are usually used as part of the selection process in conjunction with other traditional methods such as interviews.

Types of tests:

Psychometric tests are structure pencil and paper or computer based tests usually consisting of multiple-choice questions.

The main types of psychometric tests used in recruitment selection are:

Aptitude tests

Aptitude tests identify your potential to grasp new skills; they measure your natural ability to perform tasks where no prior specialist knowledge or skills are needed. The most commonly used ability tests in the graduate recruitment process are numerical and verbal reasoning tests however, you may also encounter abstract, diagrammatical and spatial reasoning tests depending on the type of job you are applying for.

Verbal reasoning – ability to comprehend and use words – concerned with spelling, grammar and sentence completion.

Numerical reasoning – ability to reason with numbers and analyse data and graphs.

Strict time limits are set and the tests are taken under exam conditions. The tests are designed so that most candidates do not complete them, so it is important that you work quickly and accurately to get as many correct as possible. There is a right and wrong answer and the questions are usually multiple-choice.

Personality questionnaires

Personality questionnaires are designed to explore your preferred way of behaving; how you relate to other people and your ability to deal with your own and other people's emotions and the way you handle and solve problems.

There is no right or wrong answer and usually no time restrictions. Try to be honest as possible and don't try to second guess what employers are looking for as tests usually have built in mechanisms to detect inconsistencies. Be yourself and remember your first response is usually the most accurate.

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How to prepare for psychometric tests:

Prior to the test day find out what types of tests will be used and check if any practice tests are available.

Employers will often send you a sample set of questions. Make sure you spend some time working through these.

Brush up on your basic arithmetic skills – make sure you can work out fractions and percentages without a calculator.

There are a number of websites that offer practice tests:

<http://www.shldirect.com/> - practice questions and useful information

<http://www.ase-solutions.co.uk> – information on psychometric tests and assessment centres

<http://www.morrisby.com> – sample questions and information

<http://www.profilingforsuccess.com> – offers sample questions

<http://www.prospects.ac.uk> – UK graduate careers website with useful information and links

On the test day:

- Make sure you know how to get to the test venue and allow plenty of time to get there.
- Have a good night's sleep, eat and drink properly.
- If you wear glasses remember to take these with you.
- Try and adopt a positive approach, view the test as a challenge and an opportunity to demonstrate your skills.
- Listen carefully to all instructions given by the test administrator. If you don't understand what is required ask for clarification.
- Read the instructions for each test carefully and make sure you record your answers in the correct way.
- Don't spend too long on any one question, if you do not know the answer move on to the next one. You will be under tight time constraints so don't waste time.
- Try to work as quickly and accurately as possible remember the more questions you answer the better the chances of getting a higher score.

Adapted from Sheffield – Psychometric Assessment Information for candidates & The University of Auckland – Selection Tests