

GUIDE TO INTERVIEW TESTING AND SELECTION METHODS

Interview Testing & Selection Methods

Occupational testing and selection is now a regular feature of the recruitment process. Employers are able to bring together a group of applicants who complete an additional series of exercises, tests and interviews that are well designed to evaluate their suitability for the role within the organisation. Although daunting, this format actually makes it easier for you to showcase a broader range of skills and competencies than you would be able to demonstrate in a short interview. For this reason, these additional tests are a much fairer and more effective way to select candidates than traditional interviews.

Although each organisation will design their own series of tests, matching the skills and aptitudes that are right for their organisation, the majority of selection methods will be the same. As well as an interview, you might be asked to do a combination of aptitude and personality tests, in-tray/e-tray exercises, written tasks, group exercises or presentations.

Psychometric Testing

Psychometric tests are designed to measure an individual's intelligence level, as well as how someone thinks, behaves, makes decisions and learns. These tests are used to identify people who are best suited to particular roles.

Although this type of testing has been used for more than 50 years, there has been a dramatic rise in the past 15 years as the recruitment and selection process has become more refined. With the majority of people having access to the internet, a large number of organisations will use online assessment tests to screen suitable candidates at an early stage.

What types of test are there?

| Assessment Test | |
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| Aptitude or Ability Test | <p>These ability tests measure general and specific intelligences, and have only one correct answer per question. They provide an objective assessment, ensuring each candidate is considered equally. As they are standardised, they offer recruiting companies evidence of why they may or may not hire someone.</p> <p>There are a range of different ability tests including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verbal Reasoning• Numeracy• Abstract Reasoning (dealing with spatial awareness) <p>Candidates who perform well in these tests tend to do better within their new roles.</p> |
| Personality Tests | <p>These are not really tests but questionnaires which are completed by an applicant to provide a profile of an individual's personality or work. Unlike the ability testing, there are no right or wrong answers, but give an employer an indication of behaviours, thinking and feelings.</p> <p>There are two main types of personality test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trait-Based: measuring specific characteristics along a scale, for example how bold or shy someone |

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| | <p>is. These are used to determine how an individual will fit into an organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values-Based: values are important to organisations, and brand values are reflected in products and services at all levels of the organisation. This type of questionnaire assesses how well a person fits with the values of an organisation |
| Situational or Judgement | <p>These tests assess the skills, behaviours and judgements when faced with a range of different situations. Individuals are often asked to rate the appropriateness of possible responses. Generally, these tests are given online and are used in the early stages when 'sifting out' candidates.</p> |

In-Tray Exercises

In-tray exercises are work-place simulations, (related to the advertised position) where the candidate is expected to role-play a member of staff who is required to deal with the tasks of a busy day in a set time-frame. As part of this, they are provided with a scenario, and a selection of letters, emails, and reports in either paper or electronic format. The interview candidate is expected to read each item, decide the appropriate action to be taken and allocate the priority. In some interviews, new items may be added whilst the task is underway, which adds to the pressure, and may change the priority of initial tasks.

An e-tray exercise is identical, however all of the information is presented on a computer, and all responses must be entered on the screen.

Employers tend to use these exercises to check whether candidates have relevant skills, and whether individuals are competent under pressure.

Written Exercises

Written exercises are used to assess an individual's ability to write in a concise manner. Employers tend to use written tasks as a large number of roles require some form of communication, ranging from writing standardised letters and emails to producing complex reports. Writing tests aim to assess whether a candidate can:

- Process information in a short time frame
- Analyse the information and decide what is relevant
- Decide on appropriate solutions
- Express oneself clearly and coherently

Examples of written tasks that could be used:

- Drafting letters and reports – a candidate may be presented with a large number of facts and figures, which will need to be analysed and an appropriate report produced.
- Case Study – The candidate will be provided with a scenario, and relevant facts and figures, and asked to produce a briefing paper or executive summary

Presentations

Presentation exercises are a selection tool, often used for positions requiring high levels of customer facing work and/or presenting information such as sales, finance and management consulting. How candidates are provided with a topic for their presentation will vary depending on the format. Candidates may be asked to give a presentation based on a prior case study

exercise, or on a group/role play exercise they had previously undertaken. Similarly, candidates may be given information regarding a topic, and given a set amount of time (usually about 30 minutes) to prepare, or candidates may be given a topic in advance of the interview date. These presentations will typically last 10-20 minutes and may be allowed to use PowerPoint, flip charts or other presentational tools provided by the organisation.

Presentation exercises primarily test a candidate's communication skills; knowledge and understanding of the topic.

Typical factors assessed in presentation exercises include:

- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Public speaking ability
- Persuasion and influence
- Confidence and ability to remain calm under pressure
- Clarity of speech and verbal ability
- Ability to interpret and relay information
- Ability to structure and design effective presentations
- Timing and ability to pace

Group Exercises

Group exercises at assessment centres are measuring the ability to work in a team, contribute, delegate, and solve problems. Assessors are looking for candidates who can listen to other people's ideas, be positive, and articulate their own ideas. In short, they measure the skills which are useful in a real working environment. During the case study, the group at the interview will be presented with a scenario or a business problem. It might be a struggling supermarket that needs a way to survive, it might be a natural disaster which needs cleaning up and dealing with. The scenarios are varied but whatever the exercise is, it will require team work and collaborative discussion with the other candidates.

To perform well in a group exercise it helps to know what the assessor is looking for. It's worth saying straight away that they are probably not looking for someone who dominates proceedings. Many candidates at a group interview session fall into the trap of wanting to own the conversation and speak for the longest, regardless of the quality of their contribution. This will not gain many marks, and will not lead to the offer of a position.

Relevant websites

- <https://www.totaljobs.com/careers-advice/interviews> - General interview advice
- <https://www.assessmentday.co.uk/> - information about the interview tests and selection methods in more detail including some free tests for you to try
- <http://www.practiceaptitudetests.com/psychometric-tests/> - practice tests for you to try
- <https://www.jobtestprep.co.uk/> - some free tests, including in-tray exercises
- <http://www.psychometricinstitute.co.uk/Free-Personality-Test.asp> - a free personality test

Related documents

- [Guide to Preparing for Effective Interviews](#)