

Psychometrics are
your friend in the
interview process.
They introduce
objectivity.

There are numerous different forms of psychometric assessments. They provide supplementary information which aids the employer to form an overall profile of you and to foresee how you will function within their workplace.

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Employers use Psychometrics as they are believed to offer greater objectivity, reliability and validity than interviews. This can only improve your chance of winning that job.

As all Psychometric assessment tools are standardised, they allow all applicants to sit the same assessment and be scored according to the same criteria, no matter where or when the test is completed. There are two core types of psychometric assessments - Ability or Aptitude Tests and Work Style Questionnaires.

Aptitude or Ability Tests provide information on a person's ability to perform certain tasks and their potential to learn and understand new information and tasks. The tests cover skills such as verbal reasoning (critical evaluation of written information), comprehension/grammar, abstract mechanical or spatial reasoning (pattern recognition), numerical reasoning, IQ (how quickly the candidate can learn and master new tasks) or information checking (checking errors / attention to detail tasks). They can be designed to highlight suitability for certain tasks, for example, computing, keyboard or foreign language skills.

Work style questionnaires are concerned with how you generally behave, such as the way you relate to others or the way you approach and solve problems. They typically explore personality

characteristics relevant to the business environment. Questions asked will often be set in work situation context. Work style questionnaires look at factors such as stress coping patterns, interests, how much you like carrying out different types of work duties, ways of thinking, feeling and acting in different work situations, interpersonal style, conflict style, leadership style, motivations and work values.

Results for Aptitude or Ability tests can produce a score which allows employers to position you against other applicants or a standard they have set within their own organisations. Personality assessments however, are not about passing or failing but about providing a profile of you to the employer, whose task it is to match an applicant to the job or work place.

It is in fact possible to practice certain psychometric assessments, although many practitioners advise against. Aptitude or Ability tests in particular can be prepared for and if you know the name of the test you are about to sit, you should be able to find a practice version easily enough on the internet. The key is to practice

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under the conditions in which the test will be taken. Most ability tests are designed to evaluate your abilities under the pressure of a deadline. So if you practice, do it against a similar timeline.

With Work Style Inventories the key is to familiarise yourself with the style of question being asked. In most cases, the format is multiple choice response. There is less benefit to rehearsing these, however, it is important to note that most assessments of this kind have a validation element whereby it evaluates how truthful you are being with your responses. Occasionally a candidate will try and give the answers they believe the organisation wants to see. However, the assessment tool will simply be voided if the validity factor is not high.

Some general tips to remember before undertaking an Ability or Aptitude Test:

- i) Ask what type of assessments/tests will be administered.
- ii) Improve your general mental dexterity ahead of an assessment by attempting word games, mathematical teasers, puzzles with diagrams etc.
- iii) Brush up on your maths, practice basic mental arithmetic with and without a calculator.
- iv) Sit a practice aptitude test by going online www.shlgroup.com

Before you complete a Work Style Inventory;

- i) Listen carefully to the instructions given. If you are not clear on what is required, ask.

ii) Study and familiarise the materials you are given thoroughly. If you are completing the assessment online, read the instructions and examples given very carefully.

iii) In particular look out for answers to the following questions:

- Will marks be deducted for incorrect answers?
- Can you choose more than one multiple choice response?
- Is there a time limit?

There can be far more questions than can be practically completed in the time allocated. You need to work at a swift and steady pace and skip questions you get stuck on. However, it is not usually advisable to skim the whole test for easy questions; this approach can tend to waste time. It is unlikely these questionnaires will have right or wrong answers, just make sure you give true answers, those that are the first thoughts that come in to your head having read the question or statement.

It is perfectly normal to feel some stress and nervousness when you are advised that you need to take psychometric tests as part of a selection process. Most of the nervousness is simply a fear of the unknown and a feeling that you will 'let yourself down' or that the test will not be a fair reflection of your strengths and abilities. The best measure to counteract this, is to learn as much as you can about the assessment before you take it and practice wherever possible.

