



The Beginner's Guide to

Psychometric Tests

by JobTestPrep

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Introduction

Welcome to JobTestPrep's beginners guide to psychometric testing. We have created this guide to help you understand the ins and outs of psychometric assessments and know the terms to put you in control of your preparation towards test day.

Whether you are a recent student, a job seeker looking for a career change or facing a promotion process, or even applying to an academic programme, you will find this guide useful.

This guide is a door to further information on psychometric testing as it not only outlines basic concepts but also provides resources for further reading and practice.

Let's begin our exploration by answering a few questions.

What is psychometric testing?

All activities and assessments that are conducted in order to evaluate candidate performance and include, but are not limited to, skills and knowledge, abilities, personality traits, attitudes and job/academic potential. This is a broad arena and one that needs explaining. There are many test styles and formats and we will cover the most common and most important areas within psychometric testing: aptitude tests, behavioural tests, and assessment day exercises.

The first group, **aptitude tests**, have the goal of assessing various cognitive abilities from numeracy and literacy skills to spatial awareness and more. These will be explained later on this guide.

The second group is focused around **behavioural tests**. These are intended to highlight specific personality traits that could indicate suitability for specific roles. These can come in the form of personality questionnaires, leadership tests, motivation tests and situational judgement tests. We will explain more about these traits further on in this guide.

The third type is **assessment day exercises**, which are based on human interaction assessments. Various exercises utilize job specific skills and simulations and are usually carried out by assessors/psychologists. Beyond the challenge of correctly understanding and answering the test questions, the other hurdle is overcoming the time constraints. Both aptitude tests and assessment day exercises have time frames which gives the tests a high pressure feel and allows candidates to be assessed on how well they cope with time pressure. Behavioural tests are not usually timed.



Why do companies use psychometric testing?

There are two major reasons companies use psychometric testing: the first is to improve and reduce HR and recruitment costs and the second is to improve quality of candidates for the long run and avoid employee turnover.

Unfortunately, the recent information and technological revolutions have turned the recruitment field into an almost exact science. Companies use sophisticated and rigorous psychometric testing procedures to optimize their recruiting and hiring processes. According to assessment consultants, using these tests can help companies find the skills they are looking for in people who are the right fit for the job and save substantial amounts of money, thus increasing profitability in the long run.



What does this mean for me?

Firstly, the testing process can actually tell you a lot about the company/program to which you are applying. If an employer stresses numerical skills or presentation skills in the testing process, that tells you that these skills are fundamental for the job. At this point you need to ask yourself whether or not you have or wish to use these skills.

Secondly, companies are looking for specific competencies and skills in their applicants, and having a good understanding of the tests will give you insight into those sought after attributes.

In addition, it also allows people who are normally nervous during interviews a chance to impress without the on the spot pressure.

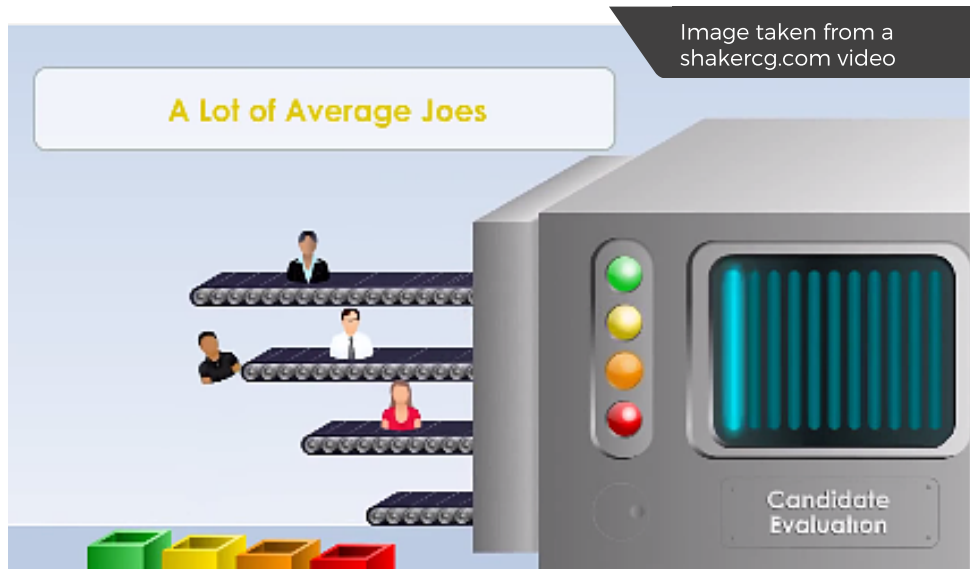
In short, use the tests to your advantage to show companies your strengths.

Now that we understand the very basics of psychometric tests, the next step is knowing how and why to prepare.

Chapter 1

WHY PREPARE?

In order to allow your best traits to shine through the testing process, preparing and practicing for these tests beforehand is the ideal choice. Knowing the material being on the test and understanding the question styles can improve your scores on the real test. By training yourself to master the time constraints and how to overcome the pressure, your raised confidence is reflected in your performance. Therefore going that extra mile to prepare for your test will pay off dramatically.



1: PREPARATION IS A COMMITMENT THAT LEADS TO AWARENESS

Preparing for your psychometric tests is often the first stage in the preparation process you must go through if you really want to get **THAT** job. It may sound counterintuitive, but the greater your commitment to preparing properly, the more you become aware of the obstacles you are facing. With the right dedication to your preparation you can overcome all of these stumbling blocks



2: PRE EXPOSURE MEANS LESS STRESS

Doing something for the first time is always difficult. So is doing something you haven't done in a while. When you don't feel confident you may be anxious and second guess yourself, limiting how well you can do in the test.

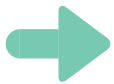
By practising the skills and tests you are taking, you become more familiar with new and forgotten skills, reduce your stress levels, and ensure that you are calm, confident and at your best on test day.



3: PRACTICING TESTS LEADS TO BETTER PERFORMANCE

Practising under time pressure, rehearsing calculations, and learning solving strategies all help you perform better in the real test. Research has shown that:

**“By becoming more at ease with the tests you are taking, and more familiar with the process of being tested, you are able to work through quantitative and analytical problems more quickly, which ultimately will lead to a higher score”
(Hausknecht and co)**



4: PREPARING FOR TESTS, MAKES YOU A BETTER CANDIDATE AND EMPLOYEE

Every company has their own idea of the perfect employee. However most of this is based on the same set of expected behaviours and performance ideals.

Situational judgement tests, personality questionnaires and other psychometric tools are now more popular than ever. Through tests like this you are evaluated on your work etiquette, management, team working and professional skills to name just a few. The right preparation for these tests will help you acquire an understanding of what employers expect of you, and how to codify just how good an employee you are.

You can redefine the standards that you expect from yourself, benefitting you in more areas of life, not just in finding a job!



5: EMPLOYERS AND ASSESSMENT COMPANIES ACKNOWLEDGE THAT PREPARATION IS IMPORTANT

Most employers today expect you to come into your tests prepared and armed to perform at your best. Gone are the days when you were told you cannot practice for the test or you are given just two sample questions before plunging into the real thing. Now even the leading testing companies provide full length tests with answers. What they don't give you though is explanations or understanding of the concepts behind the questions. Employers expect you to understand that “practice makes perfect”. Whole pages on their recruitment sites give you tips on how to prepare, how much sleep to get ahead of time, and advise you to search the internet or read newspapers to learn more about the company.

This is where we take over and really come in handy!

Please check out www.jobtestprep.co.uk to find out more.



6: BEAT THE COMPETITION

Remember that the scores you receive on your test performance is compared to other candidates applying, creating a competition. Preparation can give you an advantage over the competition, getting you one step closer to the job offer.

You can also see the [video version of this list here](#).

Chapter 2

How to Practice

Now that it is clear why practice is important, we can explore **how** to practice. Practicing and preparing for tests have two main components. One is specific practice papers and guidelines that can really help your preparation. The other is to minimize anxiety and stress by improving your attitude toward the tests themselves. Preparation in general affects how you view the tests and your motivation to succeed. By taking the tests and your preparation seriously you improve your test performance.



Before we tell you how to prepare, keep in mind the following characteristics of psychometric tests:

NOT ENOUGH TIME, TOO MUCH INFORMATION:

Tests in most cases are not meant to be completed, neither in terms of time constraints nor in terms of material covered.

CHEATING DOES NO GOOD:

Not only do companies use sophisticated procedures to verify your scores, even more so if your actual skills don't match the job requirements, sooner or later the truth will be exposed, and you will likely lose your job.

QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY:

Getting a solid mark on a few questions is better than getting a low mark by completing the assessment.



1. Know which tests you will face

Although some employers have become more supportive in terms of providing information on the selection and testing process, most still don't give out enough details. You have to do all that you can to acquire information on the **exact types of tests and exercises** that you will face. Eliminating this uncertainty will put you in a proactive mode rather than a reactive/passive one.

Efficient ways to get this information include:

- A. Contacting the employer's HR team or your recruitment agency and ask for more information.
- B. Using web resources such as **Wikijob, Glassdoor and The Student Room**. They are excellent places to connect with the community of past and fellow candidates.
- C. We have an entire section dedicated to employers' tests and assessments, so use the search bar at the top of our website and hopefully we already have a page that can help you.
- D. And of course, our support teams are always here to help you learn more about these tests and you can feel free to contact us via email at **info@jobtestprep.co.uk**



2. Find the identity of the test provider

There are so many testing companies today and each presents its own groundbreaking way of making your life as a candidate more challenging. It could be the length of the test, the difficulty level of the questions, the question style (graph/table, word problems, number series), the basic requirements (such as using a calculator) and even the visual appearance of the test. If you don't practice questions that are similar in style to those provided by a specific test provider, you risk wasting hours, money on the wrong materials and most importantly a lower performance on test day.

We focus our efforts on providing you with a customized practice experience, following the same features of many assessment companies (**have the full list as seen here**), employers and positions (grad/mgmt, general staff, senior mgmt, technical, specific professions and more!).

Find out more about how we can help you by taking a **product tour**.



3. Plan your prep journey, as short as it may be

A. If you have the time, create a study schedule. Start with rehearsing the basics. Remove rust and then try the real thing. This could be done by watching some video tutorials, or taking short practice sessions that focus on specific topics.

B. If your test is in the next 48 or 24 hours, focus on specific areas of weakness and try to simulate as many full-length mock tests as possible.



4. Learn from the explanations

You have to pay attention to the explanations that accompany each question. Usually, the explanations include some mind opening tricks and tips that could save precious time on the real test.



5. Consult with people

Sharing your difficulties with the online community is always a relief. You suddenly find that you're not the only one to have that problem and can get helpful advice from others in the know.



6. Believe in yourself and do your best

This may sound like a cliché, but hope is always helpful. Fate favors the one who tries. Just keep fighting back and you'll be surprised at the results.



7. The trivial but true

While it may seem obvious, do not forget the importance of the following advice:

A. Getting a good night's sleep: a fully rested brain is alert and ready while a tired brain is slower and less aware.

B. Find your best study hours-: if you're a morning person, get your work done first thing. If you are a night owl, save your prep for the end of the day.

C. Prep in your best environment: whether that means being isolated from all noise and distraction or blasting music, prepare in the place you can concentrate best.

You can also [see the video version of this list here](#).

Chapter 3

Aptitude Tests

We've discussed why and how to prepare but now it's time to get down to business and understand what exactly aptitude tests are. In this chapter, we will take a look at the most common aptitude tests, including numeracy and literacy tests, along with verbal and logical reasoning assessments. Having a clear understanding of the different natures and styles of each form of test can greatly enhance your ability to succeed in them and how to prepare. Given the different styles, we show you various straight forwards ways in which to solve them.

Numerical Tests

One of the most common forms of psychometric tests is number based. Mathematics is crucial in everyday life and in almost all professions. This is why they are such a common feature in psychometric testing.

There are two distinct levels of numerical tests: numeracy tests and numerical reasoning tests.

Numerical literacy and basic arithmetic operations: the 4 operations, basic calculations and use of a calculator. [Follow this link for more details, visit our basic numeracy page.](#)

Numerical reasoning: Applying interpretation and analysis skills to reach conclusions. are used in jobs dealing with higher level numerical data.

For more information, [visit our numerical reasoning page.](#)



Verbal Tests

Verbal reasoning tests are language based tests tailored to see how well the applicant can read and analyse a text or apply logical thinking on text based riddles.

Verbal testing is typically found in the form of text analysis and linguistically based questions.

Text Analysis- In most cases, the test includes a passage followed by 3-4 related questions. The questions require basic reading comprehension or the ability to draw logical conclusions based on the information provided in the text. The questions are usually multiple choice, with **true/false/cannot say** being one of the most popular types.

Linguistically based questions- Included in this category are word analogies and odd-one-out questions where quick analysis of words and their meanings is vital. These questions are shorter and require a background knowledge of the vocabulary at hand.

For more information, [visit our verbal reasoning page.](#)

Language/Literacy Skills Tests

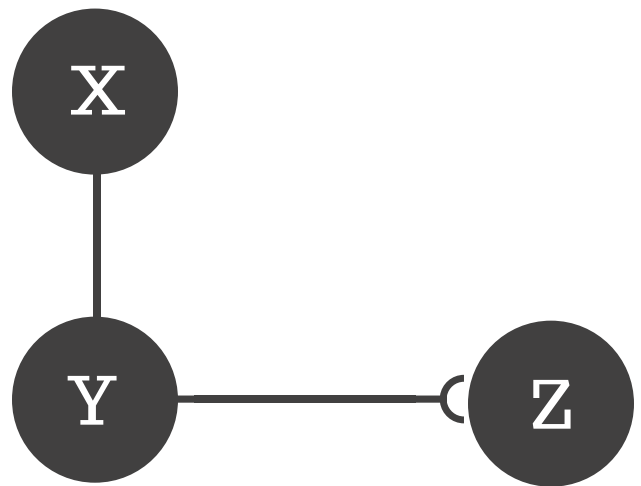
While verbal reasoning is language based, language or literacy skills tests are an assessment of your level of language and your ability to communicate clearly to others through writing. These are focused on the applicant's knowledge in areas such as spelling, grammar, sentence structure and the general ability to use language proficiently. [Detailed explanations can be found here.](#)

ABC

Deductive Reasoning Tests

These tests are designed to assess your logical thinking. Deduction questions may examine your ability to apply a set of rules ("theory") onto a specific example. Deductive reasoning tests can fall into three categories- verbal, numerical and nonverbal. While these categories utilise the same skills, non-verbal reasoning uses shapes and patterns to display information while verbal uses words and numerical uses numbers.

Please see [here for more on deductive reasoning.](#)



Abstract Reasoning Tests

Abstract reasoning is a broad category that includes tests which ask you to draw logical conclusions based on information expressed through shapes, patterns and words. The major abstract reasoning tests used and discussed below are inductive, deductive and diagrammatic reasoning.

Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning involves using specific information to make general conclusions. Tests in this area often include a series of shapes or matrices where you need to decide which answer comes next in the series or which one is missing to complete the series. [For examples of this type of test, please see our inductive reasoning page.](#)

Diagrammatic Reasoning

Diagrammatic involves drawing logical conclusions based on visual representations. This type of test uses letters, numbers and shapes to express information. You need to decipher the rules of the diagram in order to answer the questions. [To learn more about this test and its complexities, please visit our diagrammatic reasoning page.](#)

Technical Tests

These are centred on assessing the candidate's ability for a wide array of technical jobs e.g. technicians, plant operators, engineers etc. Included in this category are spatial and mechanical reasoning, error checking and concentration tests. These tests do not, in most cases, require prior knowledge of technical concepts, but rather indicate your aptitude for technical skills.

Spatial Reasoning

Spatial reasoning, awareness and orientation are all different names for the same test which assesses your ability to examine and navigate two and three dimensional spaces. These tests use images and diagrams depicting mirror reflections, cubes, perspectives and two dimensional shape organization in the questions. [For more information and examples of spatial reasoning tests, visit our spatial reasoning page.](#)

Mechanical/Electrical Reasoning

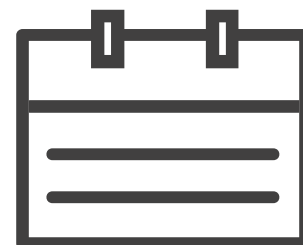
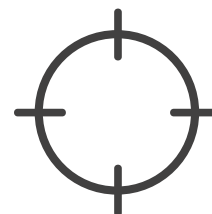
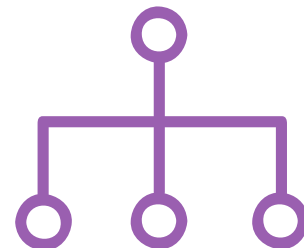
Mechanical and electrical reasoning tests either evaluate basic understanding of physics concepts, based on GCSE/high-school knowledge, or the aptitude/intuition to understand such concepts. [For more information, visit our mechanical reasoning test page.](#)

Error Checking

Error checking tests are commonly found in recruitment processes as they are an indication of your attention to detail and error spotting skills. The tests normally involve a list of numeric and alphanumeric data and you need to spot the inconsistencies in the data itself. [To see more examples of this type of test and to learn more, see our error checking page.](#)

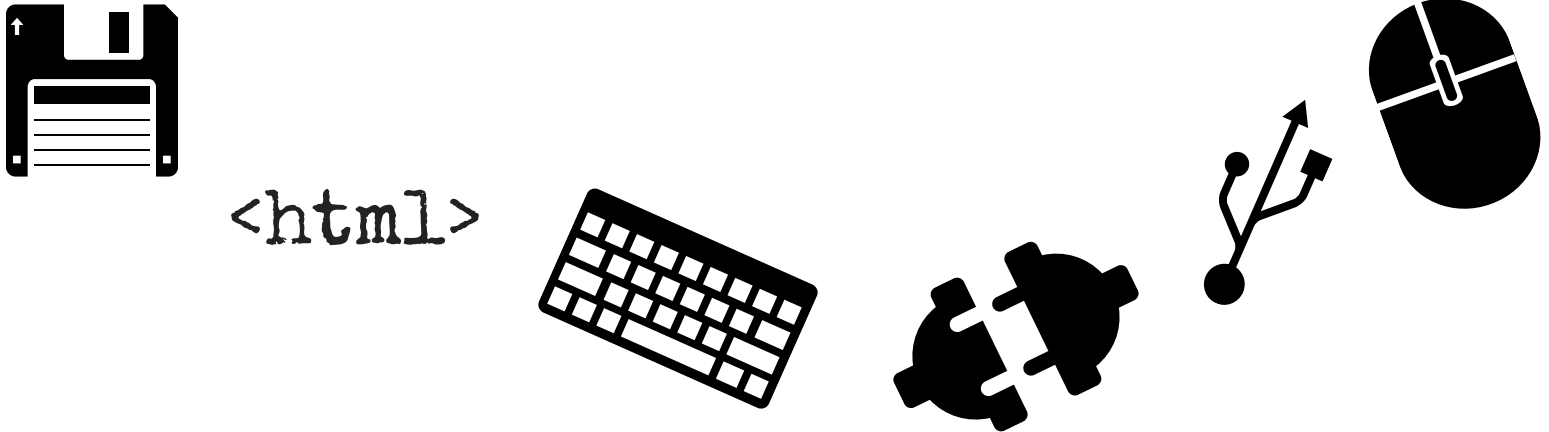
Concentration

Concentration tests are used at a range of job levels where high level of concentration is necessary to perform specific tasks. These are simple to look at but the speed and accuracy required make these difficult to focus on, not to mention how you are shown the same or similar information over and over again. [Find out more about concentration tests on our dedicated page.](#)



Skill-based Tests

Unlike the aptitude tests mentioned above, skill-based tests **do** require prior knowledge of concepts associated with a particular field. For example, many companies are looking to hire candidates with specific knowledge in various computer programs.



Microsoft Office Assessments

The modern workplace requires employees to have a good working knowledge of many commonly used computer programmes such as Microsoft Office. Companies like Kenexa have developed assessments designed to test your knowledge in key programmes such as Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and Access. Depending on the job you are applying for, these tests may play a crucial role in determining if you are the right person for the job.

For more on Excel assessments visit www.jobtestprep.co.uk/excel-assessment-test

Computer Programming Tests

Many jobs require employees to be familiar with various computer programming languages, such as C++, Go, PHP, JavaScript, HTML/CSS, Python, and SQL. The type of questions you will be asked can vary as some tests will ask you to identify the language used in a line of code. Other questions may ask you to spot an error in a line of code provided, and you can learn more about this type of test by [visiting syntax checking page](#). A third type of question may ask you to identify the outcome of various pieces of code. These are very technical tests which require a solid understanding of computer programming that is often crucial for the job in question.

Clerical Skill Tests

Another skill set to be tested can be clerical/admin skills. These could take the form of document checking abilities, typing speed and accuracy.

Learn more about this test by visiting www.jobtestprep.co.uk/clerical_test_product

Situational Judgment Tests

Another behavioural test used widely by employers is the situational judgment test. These tests combine an array of questions and scenarios that aim to test your reactions in different workplace situations. Various options are given for each case, and the applicant must pick the most appropriate and least appropriate answer for each question.



The situations on the test vary from situations based solely on the candidate to those between colleagues or employees and superiors. In one situation, an interpersonal dynamic is being presented, and the employer wishes to see how the applicant would handle this situation. By doing so, one can gauge and identify the underlying reasoning or behaviour of the applicant in interpersonal situations. This could be in the positive sense, such as the best course of action, and/or to identify the worst response. In another situation, you might also be asked to rate the effectiveness of a solution from very ineffective to very effective response, (i.e. likert scale 1-5 or 1-6).

The focus of this sort of test is to hone in on a candidate's ability to use their personal judgement and reasoning skills as well as life experiences and general knowledge.

The nature of these tests is usually tailored specifically to the particular position, as opposed to more generic questions and thus the only way to study for them is to practice scenarios.

Please [click here for more information on SJTs and find free practice tests by visiting our page.](#)

Leadership

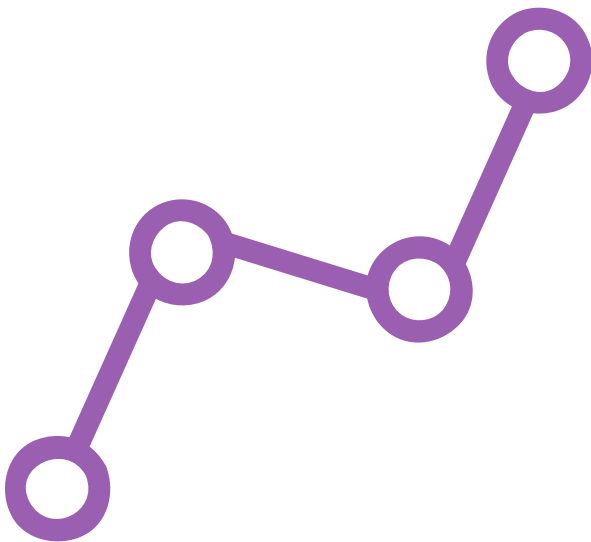
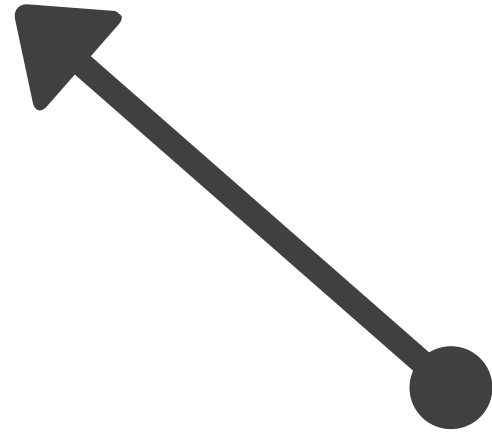
Many roles require candidates to have a sense of leadership and to have the right skills to lead at their fingertips. One way to assess this trait is through leadership questionnaires such as **this one** developed at the Kellogg School of Management.

Another way is through group exercises and role play situations. It is a popular style of assessment, as it shows other facets of a person, not just certain aptitude skills. Some exam developers establish a whole battery of tests such as:

- Leadership Effectiveness Assessment
- Leadership Personality Test
- Leadership Aptitude Test
- Leadership Style Assessment Exam
- Leadership Attitude Test

Other leadership assessments include all testing sections within a single exam.

Find more information on leadership criteria here.



Motivation

You might be thinking, why test for motivation? How will that help inform the hiring process? Well, as each person approaches the job with different knowledge and skills, each person's motivation for the job can be different and it is important for employers to hire individuals with motivations that match the position. Some positions require employees to be driven by money in order to reach goals while others require their workers to be driven by the need for artistic expression and be willing to forgo a six figure salary to feel more accomplished in a creative endeavour.

Motivation questions and questionnaires seek to establish what motivates a person and these can come up at various points in the recruitment process. Some job applications will ask candidates to write out their motivations in short essays. At a later stage, a candidate may be asked to complete a questionnaire. These assessments feature a number of questions where you are asked to rate how much a statement motivates you. For example:

Rate the following statement in relation to how it affects your motivation: Being expected to take responsibility for tasks...

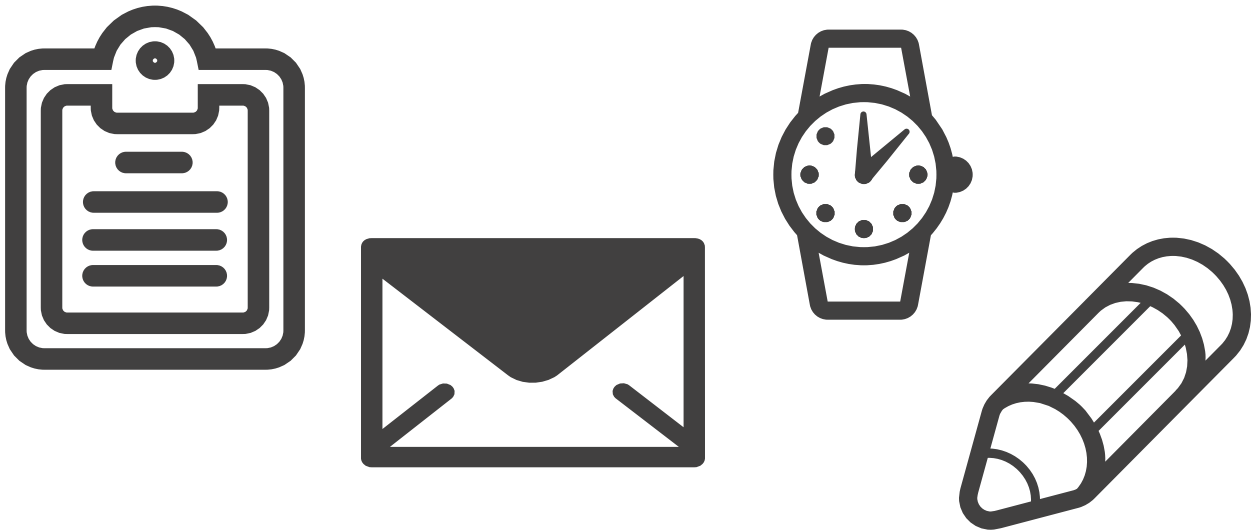
- A- Greatly reduces my motivation to work.
- B- Tends to reduce my motivation to work.
- C- Has no effect on my motivation to work.
- D- Tends to increase my motivation to work.
- E- Greatly increases my motivation to work.

For more info, please visit our motivation questionnaire page.

Chapter 5

Exercises

Along with establishing a candidate's mental aptitude and personality fit for the job, many recruiters seek to create work simulations through exercises when assessing candidates. There are numerous exercises that form part of the more personal human interaction assessment, including interviews, group exercises, role playing, and/or simulating real life office tasks and projects like presentations and case studies.



E-tray/In-tray

Scenario: During the e-tray exercise, a candidate is placed into the position of an employee, many times occupying the position they are applying to.

Task: As an employee, the candidate needs to sort through a group of resources that make up their “in-box”, be it virtual or material, and make sure to prioritise the most important tasks to be dealt with first while assigning tasks to a later date or another person. All of the materials and information needed to complete the task are provided during the exercise. The candidate's task is to use the resources and your organizational and management skills in order to organize the “in-box”.

Please note that the E-tray scenario is the online version of the In-tray exercise. This exercise can come at many different job levels, from graduates to senior management, as the skills involved are always crucial for employees.

For tips on how to complete the in-tray, [visit our tips page](#).

Find [practice e-trays exercises here](#).

Find [practice in-trays here](#).

CASE STUDY

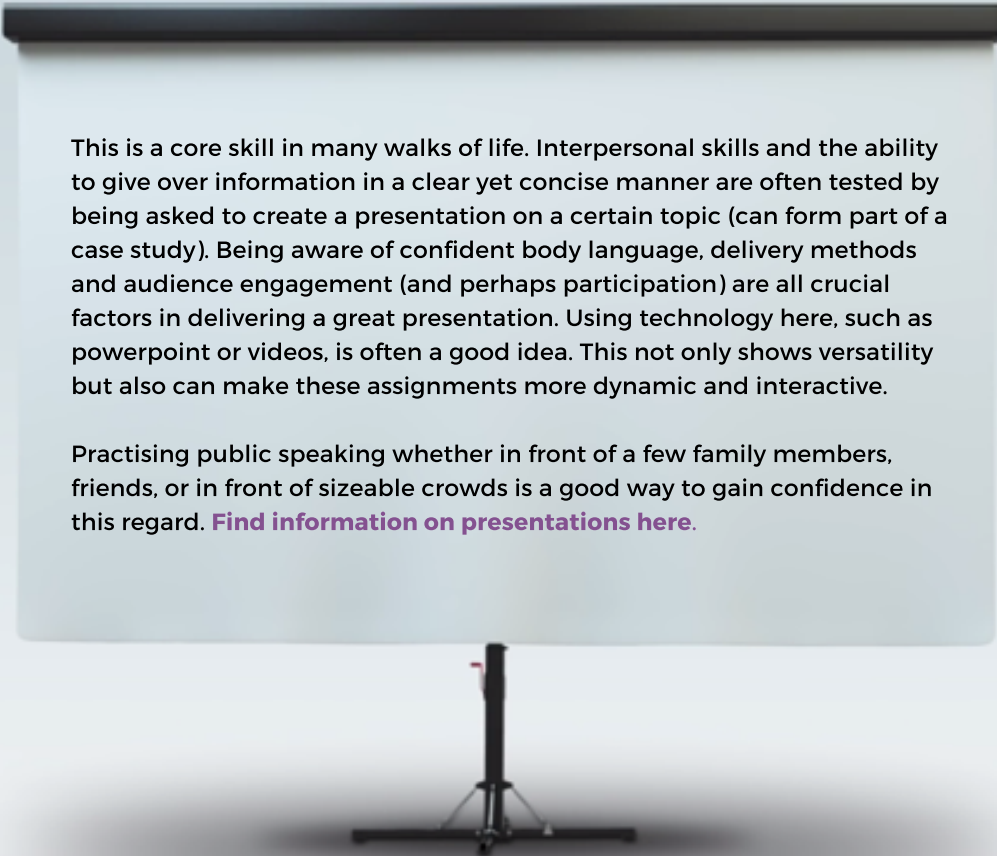
Scenario: Once again, the candidate must put themselves into the mind of an employee, often occupying the role they are applying for. The candidate is given an assignment to complete in this role.

Task: Using information provided through case study material (sometimes real and sometimes false) the candidates, acting as an actual employee, must make certain job-related decisions based on that information.

Further Tasks: Once the case study has been read and understood, the candidate can be asked to use the information to create any of the following:

- a business plan
- a presentation
- take part in a panel interview
- a written report

Case studies are real life practical scenarios that a company could ask a candidate to execute, as a way to see how he/she handles a real work project. Case study practice can be done by doing [practice samples](#) as well as training over Skype as well. [For more information on case study interviews, visit our dedicated page.](#)



This is a core skill in many walks of life. Interpersonal skills and the ability to give over information in a clear yet concise manner are often tested by being asked to create a presentation on a certain topic (can form part of a case study). Being aware of confident body language, delivery methods and audience engagement (and perhaps participation) are all crucial factors in delivering a great presentation. Using technology here, such as powerpoint or videos, is often a good idea. This not only shows versatility but also can make these assignments more dynamic and interactive.

Practising public speaking whether in front of a few family members, friends, or in front of sizeable crowds is a good way to gain confidence in this regard. [Find information on presentations here.](#)



Taken from our 'Why Should I Prepare?' video guide



INTERVIEWS

Interviews are often the final stage of the recruitment process. When deciding if a candidate is right for the job, recruiters factor in results from psychometric testing, performance in exercise and the impression received from the interview, each weighted equally. Just like tests and exercises, different companies and roles use different types of interviews to meet their needs, such as strength based interviews, competency based interviews and case interviews.

For information, [check out our guide to interviews.](#)

ROLE PLAY

While many of the exercise mentioned above require a role play element to them, some candidates may find themselves in a scenario where they are required to play a part.

Scenario: These role play scenarios often assign candidates with not only a job but a specific position, situation and attitude. The situation can be a board meeting or a one-to-one meeting with another employee or subordinate. In this last type, the applicant usually takes the role of the one giving feedback or counsel to his/her colleague.

Task: The candidate needs to complete the role play, making judgments based on the responses of the other people. These other people may be fellow applicants playing a role or they may be hired actors. No matter who you are facing, remaining calm and confident throughout is crucial.

Following the exercise, the employer may ask the group of applicants to critique each other, citing good points and things that could be improved upon. In an extreme case, the employer may ask for your opinion of who should be eliminated from the group. Whilst one is competing with the other applicants, one must be careful to remain polite at all times, and never make things personal in a negative way.

[Visit our role play page for more details.](#)

GROUP EXERCISE

The major focus of group exercises is both initiative and team working skills. In this vein, the scenario of the exercise is not necessarily related to the role the candidate is applying to. An example of a non-work related scenario is the desert island game where candidates need to decide together the most crucial items to keep for survival after a shipwreck (this scenario varies, but the basic idea is always the same). In work-related scenarios, candidates can be asked to complete a case study together or another task which involves teamwork in the job they are applying to.

The important thing is not so much whether one achieved the correct answer but that effective teamwork was used throughout. Remember the interviewers are watching and observing your social interaction and communication skills.

[For more information about group exercises, visit our group exercise page.](#)

Where to Next

Now that you have made it through the beginner's guide, it's time to start practicing!

Given the breadth of information on this topic, we are aware that this guide alone cannot cover all your questions and needs. We therefore strongly recommend to continue using our website to become better prepared for your test.

Our site is full of useful materials, helpful articles and great tricks to help you in your preparation process. Looking for something you don't see? Email us at info@jobtestprep.co.uk and we will be happy to help you find what you're looking for or answer any questions you may have. Good Luck!