

Psychometric Tests

What are Psychometric Tests?

These are tests that measure a person's aptitude, abilities or potential, eg, to learn the skills needed for a new job or to cope with the demands of a training course.

Ability tests tend to measure a particular ability such as verbal reasoning, whereas aptitude tests tend to be job-related and have names that include job titles such as the Programmer's Aptitude Series (SHL). These tests are always timed.

Personality Assessments

Personality can be defined as 'Those relatively stable and enduring aspects of an individual which distinguishes them from other people, making them unique, but which at the same time permit a comparison between individuals'.

Personality questionnaires aim to find out an individual's personality, as defined above, and measure an individual's responses against those of other people to get an 'average'. These are not tests in the same way as ability tests are, as there are no absolute right or wrong answers to the questions, although assessors will be looking for the aspects of your personality that make you right for the job. Red flags will include high levels of anxiety or timidity. However often, if there is something employers see as being negative they can ask questions about how the person deals with a situation in the interview. For example, a quiet, reflective personality can still be a good sales person as they may be a good listener, able to identify exactly what the client requires.

Personality assessments are usually not timed and are a self-report test. In a typical personality test you will be asked to respond to 300-600 personal questions. The most popular personality test in the UK is the SHL OPQ32. Other personality tests include the 16PF and BIG5. OPQ32 measures 32 personality traits such as Persuasiveness, Trust, Decisiveness and many more. The 16PF measures 16 basic characteristics such as Dominance, Apprehension, Vigilance and many more.

Tests are used...

- As a first step, to narrow the field when there are large numbers of applicants. If you attain a high standard on an aptitude test, you'll be invited to an interview
- After producing a short list of people for interview so that they can identify questions that may be appropriate at the interview stage
- Alongside a first interview, so the company can make an informed and unbiased decision about whether to put you through to the next stage of selection
- At a later stage, possibly with a second interview or as part of an assessment centre (where you complete a number of assessment exercises)

Example P1

Tick one answer only:

1. When do you feel you are at your best?

- In the morning
- In the afternoon/early evening
- Late evening

2. When something amuses you do you:

- Give a loud, appreciative laugh
- Chuckle
- Smile

Example P2

Each question has 3 possible answer options:

- A) Most like you B) Unsure C) Least like you

1. Going out you make an entrance and are the life and soul of the party

- A) B) C)

2. If you are interrupted when working hard you welcome the break

- A) B) C)

3. I live for the weekends

- A) B) C)

Example P3

1. I prefer people who keep their emotions to themselves

- TRUE UNSURE FALSE

2. I'd rather spend my free time

- Meeting friends Don't know Doing something I enjoy alone

3. I open up to people really easily

- TRUE UNSURE FALSE

Aptitude and Ability Tests

Example VR1 - Verbal Reasoning

In a verbal reasoning test, you are usually provided with a passage of information (see below) and required to evaluate a set of statements (in this case statements 1-4) by selecting one of the following possible answers:

- A) True - the statement follows logically from the information or opinions contained in the passage
- B) False - the statement is logically false from the information or opinions contained in the passage
- C) Cannot say - cannot determine whether the statement is true or false without further information

Stress

The extent of the issue (stress) is such that in recent years the Health and Safety Executive have found that one in five of all working individuals thought that their job was very or extremely stressful. This equates to five million people in the UK. Self reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounts for an estimated 10.5 million reported working days lost per year in Britain. We know that some people get more stressed than others and have different stress thresholds. But are there general things that are likely to cause stress no matter who the employee? Is bad management to blame or is it office politics?

NORTHEAST BUSINESS MAGAZINE

Answer (A) or (B) or (C) to each of the following statements by filling in the appropriate circle:

1. Office politics and/or poor management is partly to blame for stress in the workplace
A) B) C)
2. It is possible that more than 10.5 million working days are lost in Britain every year
A) B) C)
3. Reaction to stress does not depend on the individuals ability to cope
A) B) C)
4. Limited stress is good for you but too much can cause a high staff turnover as well as illness
A) B) C)

Example VR2

This example is similar to the previous one but there is a more complex passage to read through and evaluate and only one question to respond to:

A type of malaria vaccine for humans is to be tested, following the success of trials undertaken with animals. There is currently no vaccine for the illness, which kills between two and three million people every year. Oxford University scientists, part of an international team, reported in the journal 'Nature Medicine', that its virus-based jab worked well in mice. Initial small-scale human safety trials of the vaccine are now expected to start next year. Other researchers have been working towards an effective malaria vaccine, and some candidates are already in trials in humans in malaria-affected countries. However, the Oxford scientists say theirs may be more effective against the 'blood stage' of the illness, in which parasite numbers rise sharply in the bloodstream after bursting out of cells, causing severe illness, or death. The scientists behind this vaccine believe that it can trigger a massive immune response against the parasite at this point. The method involves two viruses, a common cold virus (adenovirus) and a pox virus, both of which have been engineered to be harmless in themselves, but to produce a protein on their surfaces which matches one found on the outside of the malaria parasite. When an injection of the adenovirus was followed eight weeks later by the pox virus, the results in mice were clear-cut. The vaccines produced two separate types of powerful immune response to these malaria 'antigens', hopefully priming the immune system to respond aggressively when confronted by the malaria parasite later on. In mice, it reduced the growth of the parasite by between 70% and 85%.

Question:

There is currently no cure for Malaria once someone is infected.

Answer:

- A) TRUE
- B) FALSE
- C) CANNOT SAY

Example VR3

Other verbal reasoning tests may be a series of words where you are expected to pick the missing word or words to a given sentence. The choice of answer should complete the sentence so that the words in the first part of the sentence have the SAME RELATIONSHIP to one another as the words in the second half of the sentence.

1) is to fin as bird is to

A) Water Feather

B) Shark Nest

C) Fish Sky

D) Fish Wing

E) Flipper Fly

2) is to foot as glove is to

A) Sock Hand

B) Ruler Mitten

C) Shoe Mitten

D) Inch Hand

E) Toe Finger

2) is to tall as little is to

A) Wide Narrow

B) Short Big

C) High Big

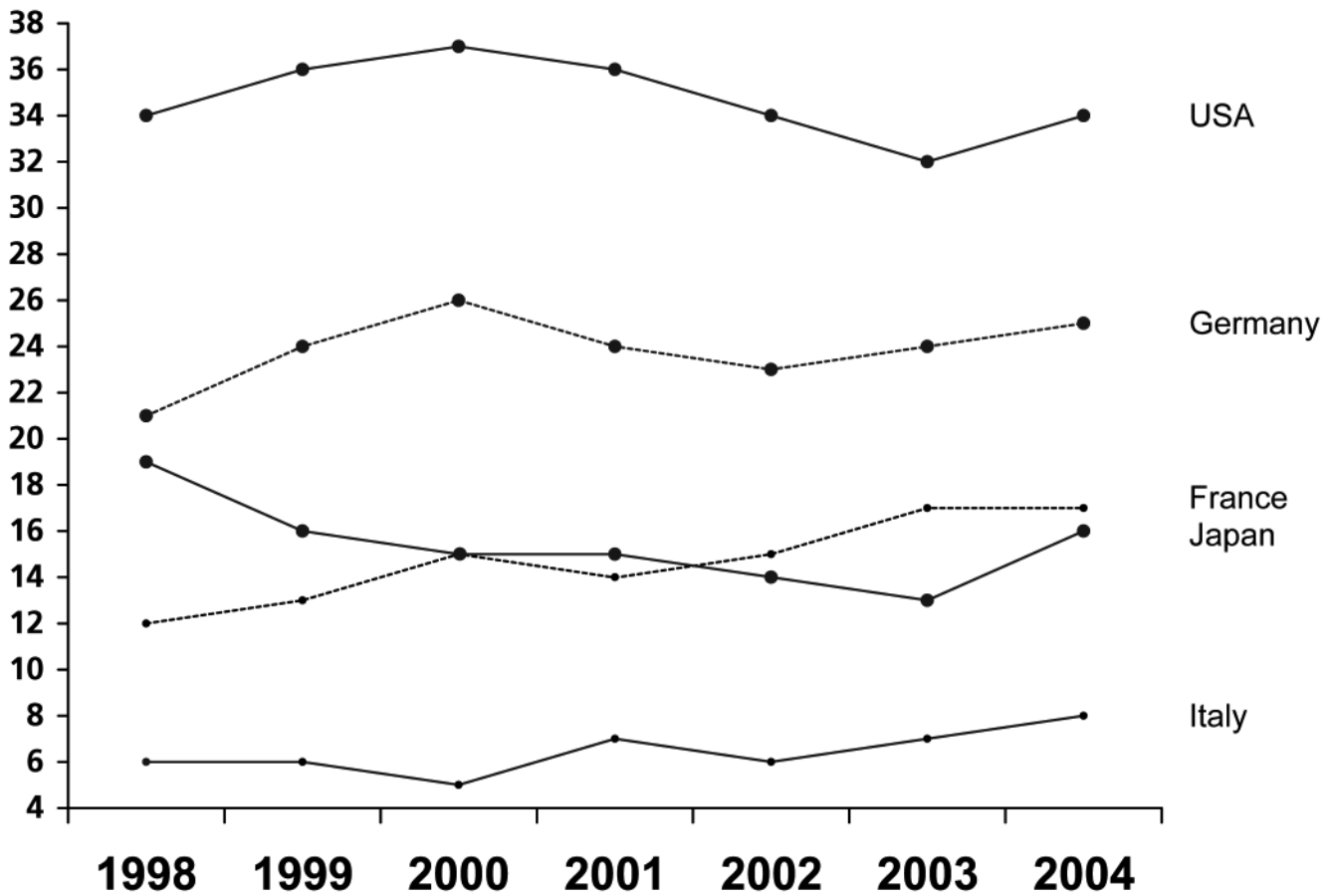
D) Short Small

E) High Tiny

Numerical Reasoning

You are required to answer questions by using facts and figures presented to you, possibly in statistical tables. You are generally given several options to choose from in each question. Only one of these options is correct in every case. You are generally permitted to use a rough sheet of paper and possibly a calculator. It is important to note however, that the use of a calculator may not always be permitted.

Example N1 (Data Interpretation)



(Import figures in £billions)

1. In 2000 the USA imports to the UK were higher than Japan's by:

- A) 35 B) 13 C) 54 D) 22 E) None of these

2. In 2003 Italy had a rise in imports to the UK of:

- A) 13% B) 2% C) 23% D) 40% E) None of these

Example N2 - Number Problems

1. Which number should replace R in this addition example?

$$\begin{array}{r} 7R \\ +R \\ \hline 88 \end{array}$$

- A) 9 B) 6 C) 4 D) 3 E) None of these

2. Which number continues this sequence?

2,400 1,200 600 300 ?

- A) 0 B) 100 C) 150 D) 200 E) none of these

3. 30% of 50% of 300 equals

- A) 150 B) 90 C) 50 D) 45 E) None of these

4. The sum given is exactly divisible by?

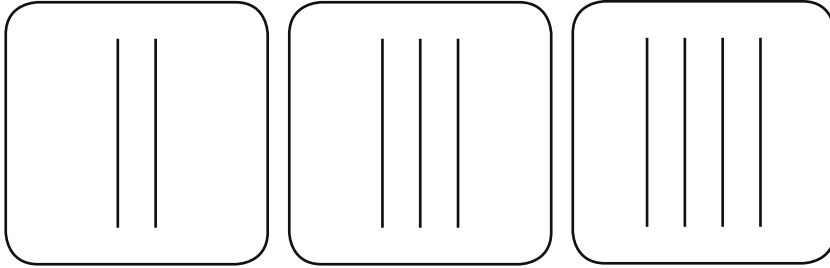
$$\begin{array}{r} 18 \\ 10 \\ \hline 17 \end{array}$$

- A) 13 B) 11 C) 7 D) 6 E) None of these

Abstract or IQ Tests

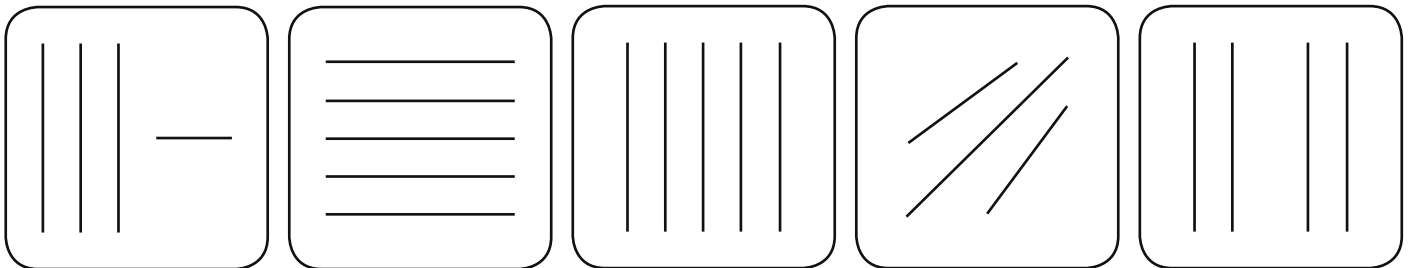
1. Each problem has problem figures and answer figures.
2. The problem figures form a pattern or series.
3. Your task is to decide which of the answer figures A-E is the next one in the series

Example AR1



PROBLEM FIGURES

ANSWER FIGURES



A)

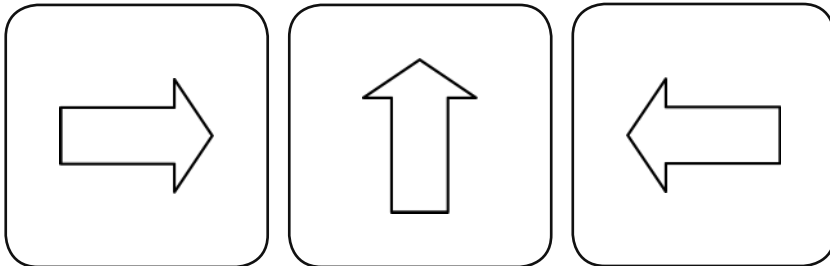
B)

C)

D)

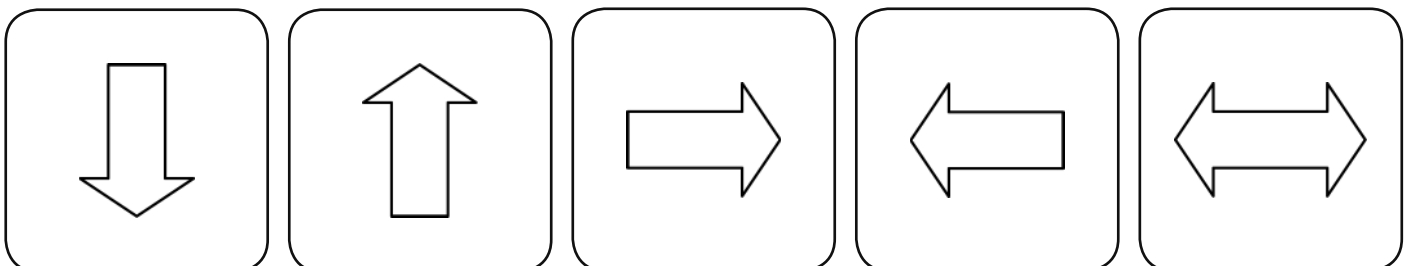
E)

Example AR2



PROBLEM FIGURES

ANSWER FIGURES



A)

B)

C)

D)

E)

Hints and Tips for test sessions

- Practice using sample tests on the internet - the websites given below are just a small sample of what's available. The more you practice the more comfortable you'll be with the different tests.
- There are a lot of test providers and all are slightly different. Tests will not necessarily be set from the big test companies, ie, SHL and OPP. There may be something completely different.
- Try to get a good night sleep before the tests. They are tiring,
- Arrive in good time, tests will usually start on time and you can't slip in late.
- The test administrator will read from a set script and it is vital that you listen very carefully as once the test starts there is no opportunity to ask questions.
- Work quickly and move on if you are stuck with a question - don't struggle with it and waste valuable time.
- Often you will not finish the test - don't worry, it is normal.
- If you finish ahead of time go over your answers and check them.

Useful Websites

Some websites may make a small charge:

www.shldirect.com free

<http://www.profilingforsuccess.com/kogan-page> free

<http://www.psl.co.uk/practice> free

<http://www.peoplemaps.com/questionnaire.php> free

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

www.bradleycvs.co.uk/psychometric.htm

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

www.jobtestprep.co.uk

Suggested Reading

How to Master Psychometric Tests by Mark Parkinson

Psychometric Tests for Dummies by Liam Healy

IQ and Psychometric Tests: Assess Your... by Philip J Carter

Practice Psychometric Tests: How To Familiarise Yourself With Genuine Recruitment Tests And Get The Job You Want by Andrea Shavick