

# Information for jobseekers – psychometric tests

Summary: A guide to taking psychometric tests for blind and partially sighted candidates

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## Introduction

This guide tells you what psychometric tests are, why they are used and what to expect if you are asked to take a test. It will help you to prepare by telling you what you need to think about in advance and what you need to ask or tell the testing organisation. Many employers will know little about sight problems or how this may affect you when faced with tests. Asking the right questions and providing the employer with key information about your specific needs will ensure that both you and the employer are well prepared. This will allow you to do your best to demonstrate your skills and suitability for the job.

It is important to communicate to prospective employers your specific needs, prior to any testing session. Clearly you can only do this, if you are aware that tests are going to be used and if you have some idea of what that may involve. It may be helpful therefore, to ask what, if anything, will happen at a recruitment and selection process or assessment centre, for example will I need to read or access printed information, and if so, for how long. The more the employer tells you about the process, the better placed you will be to outline your needs.

If you need large print or alternative formats of standard tests, these may well be available, but the employer will need to find this out. They may well need to order these materials from the test publisher, which will take time. They may also need time to prepare in other ways, for example by borrowing access equipment, arranging for a reader to be made available or to organise relevant transcription. Be prepared to allow them time to sort out these arrangements.

## **What is a psychometric test?**

Many employers now use formal tests when recruiting or selecting people for jobs. They are particularly helpful in identifying which candidates would be best suited to a particular job, especially where employers wish to narrow down a large number of applicants, or where specific skills are needed for the job. Some employers also use tests with existing staff, for example where they are trying to identify training or development needs, or assessing potential for promotion within the organisation.

Psychometric tests and questionnaires are used in this way by employers, to measure people's skills, abilities, interests or other aspects of the way they behave in job-related situations. The essence of a psychometric test is that people's performance can be measured on a standard task and in some way compared to other people taking the test, no matter where or when the test is taken. This is achieved by having specific instructions about how the test must be used, scored and the results interpreted. Employers use different types of tests, which can broadly be split into three categories.

### **Ability tests**

Instruments that measure your level of understanding or skills, for example working with numbers, understanding written instructions or ability to solve problems. For example, you may be asked to:

- use a price list to work out the cost of a customer's order
- correct errors in a written document
- spot the odd one out in a series of shapes or patterns.

In many of these you may be asked to choose the correct answer from a number of alternatives. There is often a time limit and so you need to work quickly and accurately.

## **Hints for ability tests:**

- Make sure you understand what you have to do before the test starts and do not be afraid to ask questions.  
If there is a time limit, don't spend too long on any one question. If you cannot answer a question, go on to the next  
Try to read the options before answering. They may provide a clue  
Don't worry if you cannot finish all the questions. Many tests are designed to be difficult to complete  
Make sure you indicate your answer against the correct question number.

## **Interest inventories**

Instruments that indicate the type of work that you are most interested in or best suited to. In this type of exercise, you may be asked whether you would like or dislike doing a certain type of job. For example, would you like or dislike the following:

- answering people's questions on the telephone  
cooking meals for large numbers of people  
operating a computer.

You may be asked just to tick yes or no, or to use a scale to rate how much you would like or dislike it. There are no right or wrong answers to questions. These are designed to reflect your personal interests or preferences. These are often used in careers guidance work, but employers may use them to find out what sort of person you are and try to ensure they match you to the right job.

## **Personality measures**

Questionnaires that ask you to describe your personal style or how you typically behave in certain situations. In this type of exercise you will often be given a list of different statements and asked how well they describe you. For example, do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- I prefer to spend my break-time quietly alone  
I regularly contribute to work discussions  
I am nervous when meeting new people.

Again there are no right or wrong answers, just preferences that may allow employers to match you to the right job and assess whether you would be suited to a particular job in their organisation.

Most tests and questionnaires are designed for use in standard print form, but some are available in alternative formats such as braille, large print or on tape. Some tests can also be used with a reader or a scribe to write answers. Employers may need therefore to seek advice on the availability of special formats or appropriate procedures from test producers or other experts.

## **Your rights**

You have the right to ask for special arrangements when applying for a job if you need them because of your disability.

## **The Disability Discrimination Act**

The [Disability Discrimination Act](#) gives you the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of your disability, when you go for a job. The Employment Code of Practice relating to the Act makes reference to the fair use of tests with people with disabilities. The employer is obliged to make reasonable adjustments in such circumstances. You are however, only protected under the DDA if you have told the employer in advance about your disability and needs. An organisation should be able to make special arrangements if you say in advance what you need. If they do not and you feel in some way discriminated against, you may have the right to challenge the employer and in that case. Contact [RNIB Employment Line](#) for more information.

## **Disclosure of disability**

You need to remember that in terms of your eyesight and your specific needs you are the expert. Training courses for staff involved in recruitment and selection do not necessarily cover specific training

in the types of assistance or aids used by individuals, so information you take for granted may be new to them. Employers are only obliged to make adjustments if you have told them in advance about your disability - see section on [disclosure of disability](#) for more information.

## **Preparation for testing**

If tests are to be part of the selection process, it is helpful to try and obtain as much information as possible about the exercises and what may be involved, in advance. You may for example, want to ask questions such as:

- will I be required to read printed information?  
how long will I be expected to read for?  
is it standard size print?

You may also want to think about everyday situations and consider those that give you more of a problem. If you know that hand-written text is more difficult for you to read, for example, you may wish to enquire whether any testing would involve this. In this way, you can begin to consider your needs in relation to what they will be asking you to do and outline these to the employer.

It is also useful to know that some test companies or organisations have practice tests available, so you may wish to ask for sample questions to look at in advance. These will show you what may be involved and help you prepare, as well as let you think about what you will need, so that you can discuss this with the employer.

## **Questions and answers on testing issues**

### **Will there be a large print version of the test available?**

Typically tests are printed in standard print size. If you prefer to use large print, tell the employer in advance what size, type and colour of print you prefer. They will then need to check with the test publisher whether this is available. Tests often have separate answer sheets to fill in, which could prove difficult. There may be alternatives, such as a large print version or a blank sheet of answer paper. Alternatively

you could be asked to dictate your answers for someone else to write down. It may also be possible to type or tape your answers, so it is important to discuss such options in advance with the employer.

### **As I use special equipment for reading, can I use this on the day?**

If you use a magnifier or CCTV to help you read, the employer should let you use this. If the employer offers to provide such equipment for you, make sure it is the same model that you are used to or familiar with.

### **As the level of lighting is important to me, will it be possible to adjust this on the day?**

You may prefer to be next to a window; you may need special task lighting on your desk; or you may suffer from glare. It is important that you let the employer know in advance what works best for you.

### **I read braille, will the test be available in braille?**

Some tests may be available in braille, but the employer will need time to contact the test publisher to find out. People often find it quite difficult to take tests in braille, so do not choose this option unless you are very comfortable with it. If not, it may be possible to make other arrangements, for example having somebody else to read questions to you.

### **Can I use my braille equipment to make notes or write my answers?**

It is usually possible for you to answer in your preferred way, and for your answers to be copied onto the standard answer sheets later. Other options are:

- use of somebody else to write things down (scribe)
- use of a tape recorder/dictaphone/pocket memo
- use of a keyboard

## **The voice synthesis on my equipment is noisy, can I still use it?**

In situations like this, the best thing may be for you to take the test separately in another room, or if you prefer, to bring headphones with you. Arrangements like this are commonplace in exam situations where people need to be able to concentrate in silence. The same would be true if you were dictating your answers or using somebody to read to you.

## **If I use a computer, I will need one with voice output. Will this be available?**

You need to discuss with the employer in advance whether your preferred technology will be available on the day. If you have your own, you may want to ask if you can bring it along. If it can not be used, you may need to discuss alternatives, for example use of a reader.

## **I prefer to use my own equipment, will I be able to bring it with me?**

There are advantages to using equipment you are familiar with, as it will limit the amount of new learning you need to do on the day. You may however, need to think about how portable it is and whether or not you can set it up yourself.

There may also be an issue of compatibility, not only with the software, but also with the format of the test. The employer may need to seek guidance on this from test companies or relevant experts.

## **I don't have any equipment of my own, or the equipment I have is not portable. Will it be possible for the employer to borrow some?**

There are Employment Service schemes to help fund equipment once you have got a job, although currently this help does not cover equipment loans for job interviews or testing. For this reason, the

employer may need some time to try and borrow the equipment if they don't already have it. This may mean they have to delay testing until a later date. If they are going to borrow some for you to use it is important that this it is the same make or model you are used to or familiar with, so make sure you give them details.

### **I prefer to have someone read the test to me, will this be possible?**

Depending on the type of test it may be possible to use a reader. We would strongly suggest that you do not choose somebody known or related to you. This is because you may feel awkward about not knowing an answer or they may be tempted to help you and they may not be right. The employer may prefer to provide the reader for you. Alternatively, there are organisations able to provide readers in such circumstances. The test companies listed at the back of this guide will be able to discuss such arrangements and contacts with employers. In any case, make sure you tell the reader how you would like the test to be read.

With tests that ask you about your personal preferences, you may prefer not to share your answer with anyone else, so you may prefer to record your own answers. Likewise, if someone is acting as a scribe for you, you may prefer that they do not have sight of the question booklet, so that they do not know the nature of the question to which you are responding. As before, the test companies have previous knowledge of such arrangements and can advise employers.

### **Reading braille or large print, and using a reader takes longer, will I be allowed any extra time?**

Some tests are timed, others are not. If the test is timed, the employer will need to seek expert advice about whether the test is suitable, and if so, how much extra time to give.

## **How will my test score be interpreted?**

The guide for employers will discuss such issues and ensure that they are aware of the importance of taking your visual impairment into account and ensuring that you are not discriminated against.

## **I have never taken tests before and don't know what to expect.**

Some test companies have practice questions available similar to the questions in the test you will be taking. The employer will need to talk to the test company to see if these are available and if they are available in alternative formats. Where these are available in your preferred format, they may give you a good idea of what to expect.

You may also like to know that most tests have sample questions at the beginning, before you start the test proper. This allows every test taker the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and to check that they understand what to do. During this phase the person administering the test may be able to offer you further guidance or clarify issues. If you feel at this stage that you can not access the test materials effectively or that your preferences have not been met, you should tell the person who is administering the test. You may also feel that you would prefer not to proceed with the test at this point in time, or indeed, the person administering the test may feel it inappropriate to go on until suitable arrangements can be made for you.

## **I am not sure what would best work for me in a test situation. How can I find out?**

You are probably aware of what works best for you around the house, or in everyday situations. For example, do you prefer to have a friend read something out to you, or do you prefer to enlarge it with a magnifier. This is the type of information that is needed.

**I have been told that I do not have to take the test although I understand that everybody else is still being tested. How will this affect my chances?**

Employers may think it is better not to test you because they are not sure how to do so. You can help them by drawing your needs to their attention in advance and also by telling them about the guide that exists for employers, Guide for Employers – Testing people with visual impairment. This guide provides a list of contacts for them to find out more. If they chose not to test you and you feel disadvantaged by this course of action, you may wish to find out whether you have a case to complain under the [DDA](#).

**I asked for large print and relevant equipment to be made available, but when I arrived to be tested, it had not been arranged. What should I do?**

The employer has a duty to make suitable arrangements for you. In any circumstance where you believe you have been unlawfully discriminated against or where your specific needs have not been heard or met effectively, you may have the right to pursue a case under the [DDA](#).

Your prospective employer may not have the answers to all of these questions and may not be used to testing people with disabilities. They may need to refer to the test publisher or consult with other experts.

## **Further information**

For more information about psychometric tests, please contact [RNIB Employment Line](#)

## **Test Publisher Contacts**

### **SHL Group plc**

The Pavilion  
1 Atwell Place  
Thames Ditton  
Surrey  
KT7 0NE  
Client Support Centre Tel: 0870 070 8000

### **ASE**

Hanover House  
2 – 4 Sheet Street  
Windsor  
Berkshire  
SL4 1BG  
Tel: 01753 85 03 33

### **Oxford Psychologists Press Ltd (OPP)**

Lambourne House  
311 – 321 Banbury Road  
Oxford  
OX2 7JH  
Customer Services Team Tel: 01865 31 13 53

### **The Psychological Corporation Limited**

24-28 Oval Road  
London  
NW1 7DX  
Tel. 020-7267 4466.  
Customer Services Offices Tel: 020 8308 5750.

[Information for jobseekers index](#)