

APTITUDE TESTS AND ASSESSMENT CENTRES

Aptitude Tests & Assessment Centres

In addition to interviews, employers may use a range of testing methods for further insight into an applicant's personality, motivations and abilities.

Psychometric assessment

Many graduate employers now use psychometric assessment early in their selection process. Designed by psychologists, psychometric assessments assess a candidate's abilities, personality, motivations, values and interests under standardised conditions in line with a particular role. Many types of assessment are used to help the employer build an overall profile of you and, importantly, how you would fit within their workplace. Psychometric assessment is often administered as a series of online tests and inventories and may also be a precursor to, or part of, an assessment centre. Psychometric assessments typically fall into two categories:

Aptitude test: used to measure mental reasoning ability, most commonly numerical, verbal, comprehension, and abstract or spatial reasoning skills. These tests are usually timed so the pressure can be intense. Work quickly but accurately, and don't be surprised if you can't answer all questions.

Personality inventory or motivational fit: designed to reveal interests and motivations. The typical format is preferential questions (where you select from a series of choices). There are no right or wrong responses, just individual answers which psychologists use to develop a profile to then compare to that of an employer's ideal candidate.

Emotional intelligence (EI) tools may also be used to identify candidates who possess strong 'emotional competency'. EI is your capacity to:

- recognise and manage emotions in yourself and your relationships
- use feelings to guide your thoughts and actions
- motivate yourself and others.

Preparing for tests

Prepare for psychometric testing by finding out from the employer relevant information such as:

- What sort of tests do they conduct and what do they measure?
- How long will the tests go for?
- Can a calculator be used in numeric tests?

You should also:

- practice by taking sample tests; practice speeds up your information processing, helps you understand the structure of the test and questions and reduces performance slowing anxiety – see next page for online examples.
- complete crosswords, number games and puzzles to sharpen your problem solving ability.

Assessment Centres

Following the application form and psychometric testing, some employers may conduct assessment centres. Assessment centres are commonly used by large companies throughout Australia. They are collections of tests and exercises designed to simulate an employer's business environment. They generate objective information about applicants, such as those with the most suitable personal attributes and problem solving or teamwork skills. They can also determine who would fit best and excel within the organisation's structure and culture.

Common activities may include:

- work-typical exercises
- group discussions (may form part of a group interview)
- case studies
- role plays
- presentations.

Assessment centre testing can last from half a day to three days and is usually held at the office of the employer or recruitment company.

What they don't assess

The activities are designed only to search for work-related abilities and competencies. They do not:

- probe your childhood or other personal details
- evaluate specific technical skills and knowledge (although drawing upon these may aid your performance).

Advantages for applicants

Assessment centres don't just benefit the employer.

- You can share your working style and strengths.
- Your success is not only dependent on one or two interviews.
- Should you secure the position, you can be more confident that it will suit you and that the employer feels you have the potential to advance.
- It's a fairer, more equitable hiring practice.

Preparing for your assessment

- Familiarise yourself with the job description and desired competencies.
- Read all test materials carefully and thoroughly.
- Do some internet research on the employer, industry and assessment centres.
- Dress as though you're attending a job interview and be yourself. There are benefits on both sides to fitting the right person to the right job. Expect to feel nervous before and during the assessment: the experience will involve some stress but is of great benefit to you.

After the assessment

Whatever the outcome, don't let it undermine your confidence. Even if you are not selected to progress further after psychometric and/or assessment centre testing, you have gained invaluable experience and feedback for next time.

Remember:

- Your results only reflect your performance on the day you were tested (many factors can affect this).
- You're assessed against the needs of one organisation; you won't be viewed identically by all employers, or by the same organisation in the future.
- You've gained valuable practice for next time. Evaluate your performance and any feedback given.
- You may have avoided a position which would not have been right for you in the long term.

Be yourself – in an assessment centre, it's all about finding a fit. The employer is looking to match your personality to the company culture. If you've made it this far, on paper you're qualified for the job.

There are lots of free psychometric tests and information on assessment centres online. Here are some sites to get you started:

<https://www.psychometricinstitute.com.au/free-aptitude-tests.asp>
<http://www.practicepsychometrictests.com>
<https://www.aptitude-test.com/free-aptitude-test/quick-test/>
<https://www.assessmentday.co.uk>
<https://www.jobtestprep.co.uk/free-aptitude-test>
<http://www.practiceaptitudetests.com/psychometric-tests/>
<http://au.hudson.com/job-seekers/career-advice/assessment-centre-career-development-centre>
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