Psychometric testing is now a common feature of graduate recruitment. The two main types of tests used are aptitude (also known as ability) and personality. These can be taken online or at an organised testing session. Psychometric tests are designed to measure whether you have specific abilities or appropriate personal qualities in relation to a job specification. Personality questionnaires are intended to gather information about how and why you do things in your own particular way.

**Why are they used?**
Tests are thought to be a fair method of recruitment, as they are objective in a way that interviews might not be. Interviews have been found to be relatively poor predictors of future job performance. When employers choose a test to use in their selection process they pick one where a high score on the test has previously been linked to a good performance in that role. When the right tests are chosen, aptitude tests have been shown to be a far better indicator of future job performance than other selection tools.

**Different types of aptitude test**

- **Verbal** - verbal critical reasoning
- **Numerical** - numerical critical reasoning tests where inferences need to be drawn from business data
- **Diagrammatic** - tests of logical reasoning ability presented in the form of shapes and diagrams
- **Mechanical** - a series of mechanical problems, usually in the form of pictures
- **Spatial** - assesses the ability to imagine the rotation of shapes in space
- **Clerical** - measures hand speed and fine precision skills or co-ordination
- **Dexterity** - measures near or far visual acuteness, sound or colour discrimination

If you are invited to sit an aptitude test you should be told in advance which type of tests to expect. If English is not your first language, or if you are dyslexic, you are advised to declare this before the test, as the organisation might be able to allow you extra time, or grade your results more appropriately. Test materials can be adapted for the visually or hearing impaired but you need to alert the assessors to your circumstances in advance.

**What form will the aptitude test take?**
To ensure everyone is treated fairly all tests have to be administered under standard conditions. That means you will be given exactly the same instructions as everyone else who has sat this test, regardless of where or when they took it. Before starting any test you are given the chance to complete examples to let you get used to the type of question.

**What are personality questionnaires?**
These assess your personality and how you might react in different situations. They are not usually timed, have no right or wrong answers, and are often used to see if you would fit into the company culture and can identify a working situation that would suit you. You cannot practice for these tests, but you should answer honestly and avoid trying to second-guess ‘correct’ answers. Sometimes personality questionnaires can include ‘lie detector’ tests.
How to approach the aptitude test

Usually the tests are in the form of multiple choice questions where you fill in a circle with a pencil to indicate your choice of answer if a paper version or answer using a PC. A typical test might allow 30 minutes for 30 questions. Aim to work quickly and accurately, avoiding wild guesses - you will be judged on your accuracy as well as your overall score. Skip over any questions you get stuck on. Eliminate as many wrong answers as possible, for example with a numerical test, a quick estimate may help you to discard several of the options. As you go through the test the questions may become more difficult. Tests are strictly timed and often designed so that few people have time to complete all questions. It does not matter if you do not complete the test (though you should complete as many as possible); it is the number of correct answers which usually counts.

What happens to my results?

Your results will be compared against a relevant group of people e.g. people already employed in the role, or graduates. This information will then be considered along with performance in other selection exercises such as group work, presentations or interviews. Some tests may be weighted, for instance, the score in one of the tests you sit may be twice as important as the other tests as it has been identified as the major skill required for the position.

How can I prepare for the test?

- Aptitude tests are designed to measure your ability in a particular skill so it is difficult to greatly improve your score through prior work. However, there are several things you can do to make sure you give your best performance:
  - Puzzles - word games, mathematical teasers, puzzles with diagrams etc may help to get you into a logical & analytical frame of mind
  - Verbal Reasoning Skills - practice extracting the main points from passages of information and summarising their meaning.
  - EBooks - search the library catalogue is.stir.ac.uk
  - Sit a practice aptitude test. You can practice on-line at stir.ac.uk/careers/students/applying/psych_tests/

Practice on-line

- psychtesting.org.uk
- shldirect.com/en/practice-tests/
- prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/practice-aptitude-tests-from-jobtestprep
- morrisby.com