



# Psychometric tests – a guide for disabled candidates

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## What are psychometric tests?

Employers use psychometric tests to measure candidates' abilities & skills as well as their personality & behaviour. They are seen as an effective way of assessing your suitability for a particular job role.

- Abilities & skills tests: Verbal reasoning and numerical reasoning are common types of abilities & skills tests. These types of tests are sometimes referred to as 'aptitude tests'.
- Personality & behaviour tests: Situational judgement tests (sometimes abbreviated to SJTs) and personality tests are widely used to test candidates' personality & behaviour.

It won't be that you'll face psychometric tests every time you apply for a job, but psychometric tests are used as part of the recruitment process for graduate schemes, and for other roles that may be competitive or attract a high number of applicants (e.g. internships).

Psychometric tests are nearly always timed, and the answers are usually in multiple choice form. Typically, an employer will ask you to take a psychometric test at the beginning of the recruitment process, such as the application stage. However, you might be asked to take a test as part of the final interview or assessment centre, at the end of the recruitment process.

You may also come across game-based assessments which, as the name suggests, are assessments which appear in a game format. These tend to be more interactive than the traditional psychometric tests.

## Challenges for disabled candidates

For disabled candidates, there may be multiple challenges when completing a psychometric test. This could mean you are unable to complete these tests to the best of your ability, without adjustments.

- Psychometric tests generally have a time limit and are text heavy. For some disabled candidates, it can be tough to process the questions and come up with answers in the time given.
- Others find it hard to read the text; perhaps as it is too small or because the text appears as black writing on a white background.
- Due to how psychometric tests are phrased and presented, many disabled candidates may find they are unable to demonstrate their full potential and abilities. For example, someone who is dyslexic might find any type of psychometric test hard because potentially verbal instructions may be required.

Employers tend to be familiar with the adjustment of giving extra time but might be less knowledgeable about other adjustments, which can pose a challenge. An employer may say to you that they have not previously given the adjustment you're asking for, or that the tests are outsourced to another company, and therefore they have been told that the adjustment you're asking for isn't possible.

You may need to negotiate / compromise with the employer to find a solution and this can take time and perseverance.

## What are adjustments?

Adjustments – sometimes called 'reasonable adjustments', 'accommodations', or 'workplace adjustments' – are changes employers can make at your request.

In this resource, the words 'adjustments' and 'changes' have been used interchangeably.

If you are a disabled applicant or disabled employee, employers must make sure that you are not disadvantaged when completing a job application or carrying out a job role. Employers must therefore provide adjustments for those who require them.

As a disabled applicant, you have the right to ask for changes to be made to: an application form, psychometric test / other type of test, assessment centre, or interview (be that face-to-face, telephone, or video).

Although you might not view yourself as having a disability, it states within the Equality Act 2010 that employers must make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants who need them. Adjustments won't be available if you haven't made the employer aware you have a disability.

There may be a section on the application form to do with disability / support needs, where you can choose to let the employers know you have a disability / disabilities. How you share information about your disability and how much detail you give is up to you. (For AGCAS members, please find more information around this via the link at the end of this resource).

## Which adjustments might be possible?

Adjustments for psychometric tests should meet your individual needs, but here are some that disabled candidates have found useful:

- Extra time. Though the standard suggestion employers make is an extra 25%, you might feel you need more than this, or for the timer to be removed altogether.
- A text-to-speech application / software so the test can be turned into spoken word.
- A modification to the format such as: larger text, alternative to multiple choice, screen reader compatibility, or a change to the background.
- Doing a written, paper version of an online test. This might be because the changes you need can't be made to the online test.
- Access to a reader, scribe, or a British Sign Language interpreter.
- Extending the deadline to complete it by (this might not be possible as it could have a knock-on effect on the employer's timings for the next stage of recruitment).
- For taking tests at an assessment centre, a private room to complete the tests, break in between them (rather than sitting them one after another), ergonomic chair, or adjustable desk.

Lowering the pass mark for a test isn't likely to be a possible adjustment.

It might be that you have a different adjustment in mind that isn't listed above. These are just examples and not a comprehensive list. Alternatively, you may feel you won't need any adjustments for psychometric tests.

## How do I know if I need an adjustment?

Take some free online practice psychometric tests. As you would be completing these practice tests without adjustments, you would be able to get a better idea of what changes you may need.

Think back to psychometric tests you have taken in the past. What would have been useful to have in place at the time?

## Advice for facing situational judgement tests (SJTs)

The hypothetical questions asked in SJTs can be very tricky for some autistic and neurodivergent candidates. This is because of how the questions are worded and because the context behind why these questions are being asked might not be clear.

### Suggested adjustments for SJTs:

- Take a free practice SJT online. If you find it very difficult, an adjustment might be for you take a different type of psychometric test altogether, instead of doing the SJT.
- It might be that you are able to request to read the questions in advance of taking the test.
- The employer may be happy for you to have a reader for the test. This person would read out the questions (and the possible answers if it is multiple choice format) but wouldn't be able to help you with the test beyond that.
- Another option might be for the employer to ask you the SJT questions. Instead of the employer simply reading out the questions as they appear on the test, it could be helpful if the employer provides some context at the beginning of each question, for example 'I am asking you this next question to understand how you would go about prioritising two competing work deadlines.' (To note, this is also a potentially useful adjustment to have in an interview situation).
- You could ask the employer to give you an example of the type of answer they are looking for.

These types of changes are about how the test can be better communicated, rather than adjustments to the look or format of the test.

## General tips

- It's better to ask for adjustments before starting a psychometric test. This is because it might take some time for the employer to discuss the right adjustment with you and to then put it in place.

- If the employer has let you know you will be taking psychometric tests, but they haven't specified which ones they will be, ask them which tests you'll be doing. It might be you find out you will be doing a numerical reasoning test and you have practiced those and know you don't need any changes making. On the other hand, it might be a test for which you do need an adjustment, for example a game-based assessment.
- You might need more than one adjustment made to a test, for instance both extra time and larger text.
- If you have an idea of what might be the right adjustment / adjustments for you, it is important for the employer to be guided by you. But, employers might have supported other candidates requiring adjustments, so may be able to make some suggestions.
- At the beginning of psychometric tests there will probably be a practice question to try out first. These are sometimes easier/clearer than the rest of the questions in the test. This means some people do the practice question and then decide they won't need any adjustments, only to find the actual questions are much harder and more time-consuming to work through than they first thought and regret not asking for adjustments.
- It's likely you'll only get one chance to take the psychometric test, so you wouldn't be able to start a test and then decide to stop and retake it again.
- When taking tests during the recruitment process there will be a deadline to complete them by (like there is when you apply for a job). Take the test when you are at your sharpest (be that morning, afternoon, evening) and make sure you are free from distractions before starting so you can give them your full concentration.
- Read the instructions and try to complete as many questions as you can without rushing too much. Answer questions honestly and don't try and second guess what answer they're looking for (a common mistake with personality tests).
- Adjustments for psychometric tests are often straightforward and free for the employer to make. Occasionally there is a cost to putting in place an adjustment, but this is not something you would be paying for as the candidate.

## Guidance for current university students

- An employer might ask you to share the adjustments part of your university study support plan. If they do, share this if you feel comfortable doing so. You may in fact not have a university study support plan as perhaps you don't need any study support at university or maybe you don't have a formal diagnosis.
- It's worth remembering that the adjustments in that document are tailored to your study support needs. So, if you have 25% extra time to complete coursework or exams, this might not be enough extra time for psychometric tests or may not be the right adjustment at all.
- The purpose of sharing a document like a support plan with an employer is to help identify the adjustments you may need. You shouldn't be asked to provide evidence

of your disability unless there are specific reasons like having a disability is a requirement of the role, or you are applying as part of a disability scheme.

## Things to remember

- Think about what adjustments you need so you can let the employer know.
- Extra time is a standard adjustment, but that might not be right for you, so you may need a different change to be made.
- Don't leave it too late to speak with the employer about the changes you require. It might take some time to work with the employer to find suitable adjustments.
- If you are unsure which changes may be needed, the employer might have had experience of supporting other disabled candidates so potentially could have some helpful suggestions.
- You might feel that you don't need any adjustments making at all, or only need them for certain types of test.
- Although game-based assessments are described as more inclusive than other psychometric tests, this won't be the case for everyone, so you may need adjustments if facing these.
- Adjustments aren't about being treated more favourably than other candidates. They are there to ensure all applicants taking part in the recruitment process can do so in a fair and accessible way.
- Psychometric tests are hard, so practicing is key. Get in touch with your university careers service if you'd like to find out some general information on psychometric tests and assessment centres. They'll also be able to suggest where to go to find free practice psychometric tests.

For AGCAS members - more information around informing employers about your disability/ disabilities can be found [here](#). (Note, your AGCAS log in is required).