

10 Tips for Taking Ability Tests

There are a wide range of different ability tests available, however these are some key hints and tips we believe will help you perform at your best on the day.

1. What's it all about?

Where possible find out what the tests are actually assessing. Knowing whether you'll be taking a test on 'calculation' or 'understanding instructions' may help your preparation.

2. Practice!

Most test providers will have practice tests for you to try before you sit the actual test. Ask how you can access practice questions relevant to the test you will be sitting.

Here is an example of some practice tests.

3. Pay attention to instructions – and ask for help!

Instructions may be read aloud to you and/or may be given to you to read. Make sure you read/listen carefully and that you understand them. If you aren't sure about anything, ask for help before you start. You may not be able to ask once the test has started:

- What you've got to do
- How to complete the questions/answer sheet
- How much time you have for each question and/or the whole test

4. Pay attention to the questions

Make sure you know what the question is asking you - often it's something more straightforward than you first think! For example in multiple choice questions there is sometimes a "Cannot Say" option but if you don't spot this you may spend a long time trying to work out something that cannot be worked out!

5. Wear a watch....and remember your reading glasses!

If you've only got 10 minutes to answer 30 questions you'll probably want to keep an eye on the time and if there's not a clock you'll be grateful for your trusty watch. (Many assessors will ask you to turn off your phone so you can't always rely on using that for timekeeping!)

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6. Think about speed AND accuracy

Different tests measure results in different ways. Ask whether your test is looking at speed, accuracy or (as most do) a combination of both. If in doubt, our advice is always to: "Work as quickly and as accurately as you can throughout the tests and if you aren't sure of the answer mark your best choice but try to avoid wild or random guesses."

7. Ask for feedback

Always ask if you can receive information on your results. It can be helpful to know how you could perhaps improve for the future. For example, if you answered questions accurately but just didn't answer enough in the time provided you'd know you increase your speed.

8. Don't give up!

Pass marks differ from one test to another and often you don't need to complete all questions correctly to pass. Additionally when you have two or more tests to complete you may find one test is weighted more than another. So, if you have to skip a question or you feel you haven't done well on the first test and still have another test to go, don't give up!

9. Remember first impressions!

In addition to the test itself, remember you are also being assessed on the day in other ways. If you act unprofessional, are late, rude or are unmotivated it won't go unnoticed. You may pass your ability test but might have failed the all-important "first impressions" test!

10. Testing at home

Give yourself plenty time, peace and quiet to complete the test. Make sure you have access to a reliable internet connection (and feedback any problems that may impact on the time you took). Have all the equipment you need to hand (eg calculator, rough paper, pencil)

Turn off your phone and ignore the door - once you've started a test it's not always possible to pause it!

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