

## What are psychometric tools?

Psychometric tools are questionnaires or tests that help businesses to select the right people, facilitate individual and team development, and increase organisational effectiveness. Some should only be used for the development of individuals, while others are designed and validated for selection. They fall mainly into the following categories:

**Personality:** a powerful method of predicting how someone will typically behave.

**Ability:** measure aptitudes such as how someone will perform when solving problems or reasoning with verbal information; many try to measure potential rather than current level of knowledge.

**Interest Inventory:** help to identify the types of work to which someone would be suited.

**360° feedback:** gather feedback on an individual's performance or personal attributes from many sources, typically their peers, superiors and direct reports.

## A psychometric tool should be?

**Objective:** the results obtained from it are not influenced by the administrator's personal preferences or biases.

**Standardised:** it is administered and scored according to standard procedures; people's scores on the test are compared to known benchmarks.

**Reliable:** it measures in a consistent way.

**Valid:** it measures the characteristics which it sets out to measure. A test used for job selection should predict relevant aspects of job performance. A test of verbal ability should predict this area and not some other skill.

**Discriminating:** the test should be discriminating, showing clear differences between individuals on the behaviour being tested. It should not be discriminatory, unfairly discriminating against minority groups on the basis of irrelevant characteristics.

## Why use psychometric tools?

Individual tests are among the best single predictors of job performance and are even more powerful when combined with other tests or interviews. They provide an objective and fair method of selecting and developing staff and help to remove bias and discrimination.

**The proven benefits of using psychometric tools include:**

- Increased objectivity in staff selection and development
- Improved individual and interpersonal effectiveness
- Enhanced teamwork and organisational performance
- Improved staff performance, morale and retention

**They can be used in many contexts, including:**

- Selection and assessment
- Individual and leadership development
- Team building
- Organisational change and development

**Common myths explained:**

**They are expensive:** while there is an initial outlay in training administrators and test interpreters, running costs are low.

**They are not cost-effective:** their accuracy in predicting job-performance makes them cost-effective, particularly when compared with the costs of recruiting replacement staff.

**People can fake them:** ability tests are extremely difficult to fake and with personality questionnaires there are built-in checks to highlight if this has been attempted.

**Some people are naturally good at tests:** psychometric instruments are not open to any more bias than interviews, where people can be trained in interview technique. People are best prepared by being relaxed and rested on the day of testing.

**They do not reflect the job:** before using any assessment tool, an employer should determine which attributes and competencies are needed for the job. Any psychometric assessments should measure these and will therefore reflect and be relevant to the job.

**They are time-consuming:** administering a test or questionnaire varies from ten minutes to over an hour. Often the questionnaires can be administered to many people at the same time, which can make them more time-efficient than other assessment or development methods.

**They are unfair to people with disabilities:** it is often straightforward to make reasonable adjustments to the assessment process in order to alleviate any potential disadvantage.

### **Using psychometric tools ethically:**

The Australian Psychological Society and other international bodies have developed guidelines to ensure psychometric instruments are chosen and used correctly by qualified users. These include the administration of tests under controlled conditions, telling people which tests they will be taking in advance and providing preview or practice materials.

We believe that adherence to ethical standards in using any psychometric is important to protect and preserve respondents' rights, and ultimately to ensure successful use and acceptance of such tools. We follow these guidelines, and determine eligibility to purchase psychometric materials on the basis of training and experience. Therefore, unless otherwise noted, the psychometric instruments distributed by us are restricted to professionally qualified practitioners who have registered their qualification details with us.

As we believe that ethical standards of use should not be optional, we have incorporated these guidelines into our guidelines for ethical use of tests and questionnaires.

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