



careers advice pack

13. Other selection activities



Other selection activities

It's increasingly common to be asked to undertake tests or other activities during the job interview process.

Here is a brief guide to some of the more common activities...

Presentations

You are only likely to be asked to give a presentation if you will be presenting to groups as part of your role e.g. in sales or training. However they are occasionally used at other times as a selection method.

It's normal practice for you to be told in advance about a presentation. You'll need to clarify the details. Make sure that you know the following:

- The subject you are asked to present about
- The length of time the presentation is to last
- The equipment that will be available (laptop and projector, flipchart etc)
- Compatibility of any software you will use with the software in use at the venue
- Any requirement to send in your presentation in advance so that it can be set up on the computer system, or should you bring it with you on memory stick?

Keep your presentation simple, but informative. Practise so that you know you can confidently cover the material in the time allotted. It's always a good idea to take paper copies for your audience. They could save the day in case of equipment failure, or they can be used as a handout.



Aptitude tests

These are quite often used by larger employers. They will only ever be used as part of the decision on whether to offer you the role.

Unlike most exams that test your learned knowledge and abilities (i.e. what you know and can do), aptitude tests test your potential abilities or aptitudes in the future. Typical tests will be of verbal, numerical or perceptual reasoning. There are a wide range of tests in use, so seek specific information about which tests will be used and what feedback you will receive.

Aptitude tests cannot be learned, but it's useful to practise and become familiar with them. Books of aptitude tests can be bought at W.H. Smith or Waterstones. They can also be found on the internet. Most university websites have a careers advice section and these often have sample aptitude tests. For example, here's a link to the Loughborough university site:
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/service/careers/resources/profiling-for-success/aptitude-tests.html>

On the day, the test administrator will normally give you practice questions before each test, to ensure that you understand what you are supposed to do.

The tests are designed so that it is unlikely that you will complete all the questions in the time, so don't worry if you don't finish. Work as quickly as you can through the questions, being careful not to make mistakes. If you get stuck on a question, move on to the next - the score depends upon the number of correct answers. You can always go back to unfinished questions at the end if you have time.

Personality questionnaires

These questionnaires are also often used by larger employers, and again are only one part of the decision in the selection process. They typically measure different aspects of your personality and preferred style. For example, traits such as leadership, teamwork, how you



careers advice pack

make decisions, how you manage, how you interact with colleagues, whether you are a people person or a more analytical type, etc.

The questions have no right or wrong answer. Try to answer them honestly and sensibly. The test administrator is likely to advise you to work through the questions fairly quickly, putting down the first thought that comes to mind rather than over-analysing each question.

Sample tests can be found online and university websites are a good place to find them.

Group exercises

Group exercises involve getting a number of candidates together to work on a task or discuss a topic. You'll be observed by recruiters around the room. To help you prepare, think about your natural role in a team. What are your strengths? Have you any limitations?

If you are usually the leader, remember it's a team exercise. If you are an excellent listener, very good at allowing and summarising others' views, remember that your own opinion must be heard too.

If you can, talk through your behaviour and tactics with someone who has worked with you.

On the day, enter fully into the exercise. Keep calm and focus on your own performance, but make sure you listen to what others say. Try not to be overly influenced or irritated by the behaviour of others in the group. Stick to your own way of doing things.

In-tray exercise

This is usually a series of tasks presented to you in an in-tray, for you to prioritise and work through to a time deadline. Marks will be given for priority, time-management, clear thinking and analysis. Make sure you are clear about your system of working and priority and if possible show this in your answers, or be ready to discuss this with an interviewer afterwards.



Assessment centres

Assessment centres may be used by larger employers as a means of selecting one or more candidates from a group. They can often be run as the second/final stage of a recruitment process.

Assessment centres will usually involve a mixture of the above selection processes, together with further interviews.

There may well be a lunch or dinner included in the day and sometimes an overnight stay. Always seek clear information about what will be involved and what you are expected to bring or prepare.

The following points will help you succeed at an assessment centre:

- Be confident in the knowledge that the employer is really interested in you. Assessment centres are costly to run, so they won't have invited you unless you are a good candidate.
- Focus on each activity as it comes and try to relax.
- Take breaks and get fresh air so that you can perform well throughout the day.
- Avoid too much tea and coffee (or alcohol if there's a bar in the evening).
- Remember that the informal parts of the assessment centre matter too. Be professional at all times.