

## How to Pass a Personality/Suitability Test

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Do you never seem to be able to land a job because you do so poorly on those pre-employment "personality tests"? Despite the horrible ethical implications of using a computer to assess one's personality, companies believe in them and they're not going away any time soon. Some will argue that "there is no right or wrong answer, the test is a way to make sure the potential candidate is the best match for the company." In today's volatile job market, of course there is a right answer: the answer that gets you hired. In this article, you'll learn the ins, outs, tricks, and pitfalls with taking these pre-employment screenings.

First, you have to realize that the people making a lot of the major decisions in most companies are way out of touch with reality. Whoever makes the decision to implement personality tests for potential new-hires is enticed by the supposed savings and increase in the overall quality of employees and disregards that these tests are extremely flawed for several reasons. Almost any personality assessment you'll ever take does not apply to the real world in the slightest bit, and we're going to explore why.

**The first type of question you'll encounter is the "no-brainer." It's meant to establish that the test taker isn't completely brain-dead. A good example of a no-brainer is:**

I can count to ten.

*True*

*False*

Obviously, you shouldn't get any of these wrong as long as you're paying attention.

**The next type of question is slightly more tricky, wherein it gives you multiple outcomes which are equally socially acceptable, but tries to establish a "personality type." The best thing to remember is that you're trying to establish that you're an outgoing, friendly person. Here are a couple of questions you'll encounter:**

I like to be in a large crowd.

*True*

*False*

Although the casual applicant may think that neither of these are undesirable and that there is "no wrong answer," the hidden subtext of the question is trying to establish if you're an introvert or extrovert. You of course want your prospective employer to think you're an extrovert, so answer "true." This type of question may take several forms, so be on the lookout. Here are some more examples of questions like this and the correct answers.

I like to be alone. *False*

I don't mind being the center of attention. *True*

I like going to big events with large crowds. *True*

Remember, you have to answer all of these questions in a similar manner to score the highest.

**The next type of question tries to establish your work habits. Obviously it is in your best interest to answer all of these questions in a way that makes you look like a dedicated, efficient, hard worker. Most of them are easy, but there are a few that can be tricky. Take the following for example:**

I work my best under pressure.

*True*

*False*

Most people will second-guess this question and think "Well, if I answer 'true', then they'll expect me to work extra hard." Remember, it's just an assessment. The score is interpreted as a raw number. The individual answers have no bearing on your job placement; the only thing that's important is that the answers are right. Therefore, when a question like this arises, always answer favorably. Here are some sample questions and their correct answers:

I take frequent breaks while working. *False*

I tend to find more to do when I'm done working. *True*

I don't need a lot of direct supervision. *True*

I work best under direct supervision. *False*

This last one is quite tricky, because some people DO work well under direct supervision, and there's nothing wrong with that. But to the writers of the test, this question is asking:

If I'm not constantly under supervision, I will slack off.

**This type of question attempts to establish your aptitude for customer service, leadership, and self-management. These are usually not that deceitful, but there are some to watch out for. Take this question:**

A customer approaches you who is obviously angry and starts yelling at you. You:

*Yell back. The customer is being abusive and disrespectful and must be put in his place.*

*Call your supervisor.*

*Smile, calmly apologize to the customer, then ask him what you can do to help the situation.*

*Call the police.*

These answers represent many actions that an average employee will take. The ideal employee will not overreact and call the police or get into a yelling match with the customer, but will also not go whining to the supervisor with every little problem. The correct thing to do is handle the situation the best you can, and only escalate the problem to the supervisor if it's something you can't resolve. On the other hand, you may run into this type of question:

A customer walks up to you and asks to speak to a supervisor.

In this instance, the correct answer is "get the supervisor." While they want someone who can resolve problems, they also don't want someone who will act like an overconfident jackass and try to step on their toes. Just remember to stay in the frame of mind that you can handle most problems, but if the problem is out of the scope of your job, you're willing to enlist the help of management.

**This last type of question is the epitome of corporate doublethink. Consider the following question:**

I know someone who has stolen something.

*True*

*False*

Of course everyone knows someone who has stolen something, be it a friend, a co-worker, or a shady uncle. So, the average test-taker would think, "Of course I do, everyone does, but what does that have to do with me getting a job here and today? Besides, they must think that if I put 'false' I'll be lying." and answer "True." But since these tests are designed by people who are completely out of touch with reality, they assume that a quality candidate will truly not know ANYONE who has stolen anything, or if the candidate does, he or she pretends to not know about it. The real question they're asking here is:

I hang out with thieves.

*True*

*False*

These questions are meant to assess how likely an prospective candidate is to cause a loss to the company, either by lying, cheating, or stealing. Here are some questions like this, and the questions they're really asking:

It's OK to tell someone a small lie to spare his or her feelings. *I'm a liar.*

It's OK to take home supplies you use at work. *I'm a thief.*

If a cashier gave me five cents over my correct amount of change and I noticed in the parking lot, I would go back and return the change. *I will cheat the company out of money.*

It's maddening when criminals go free. *I don't believe in our justice system, therefore by extension don't believe in company policy if I don't agree with it.*

I dislike taking orders. *I have no sense of respect for authority figures.*

I've done my share of troublemaking. *I'm a delinquent and shouldn't be hired.*

It's easy to see a pattern emerging here. If you see a question like this, always look for the hidden subtext, answer accordingly, and you'll do fine.

**Sometimes these tests involve a skills assessment that can include simple math or even common sense scenarios. These are almost always presented in a multiple choice format, so that gives you an advantage from the beginning. Remember the few simple rules of multiple-choice testing. For math questions, there are usually three or four egregiously wrong answers and one correct one, so doing approximate calculations in your head will save you time. With verbal questions, the longest and/or most complex answer tends to be the correct one. Take the following for example:**

A quasar is:

*A type of planet*

*A star*

*A super-massive, relatively small object located at the farthest reaches of the visible universe that releases more energy than the most powerful active galaxies.*

*A cut of meat*

The above example is an over-exaggeration, but you get the idea. The last rule of multiple-choice testing is if you truly don't know the answer, just guess. You'll usually have a 20%-25% chance of getting it right.

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