

## **ABILITY TESTS**

### **Hints & Tips**

#### **Understanding Information test**

Read the passage carefully and completely before trying to answer any questions. Don't be tempted to 'skim read' – you will just waste more time later having to re-read the passage. There is also a risk that if you read something wrongly when you read the passage the first time it will stick in your mind and even when you re-read the passage you'll read it wrongly again!

Read all the possible answers for each question carefully. Choose the correct answer but before you mark the sheet, positively discount the other 3 – ie know why they are wrong. If you can't discard 3 you need to double check the information in the passage.

Don't rely on anything other than information in the passage to answer the questions. Sometimes the question will specifically say "according to the extract" or "Which of the following is stated in the article" – that should be an extra reminder not to try to use common sense or knowledge that you have from elsewhere. However some questions might require you to make a sensible inference or interpretation of what is written, even if something isn't explicitly stated.

For example:-

"As part of the maintenance check, the valve should be tested to ensure that it opens and closes fully."

According to the article:

- a) Valves often become corroded
- b) Valves are difficult to replace
- c) A faulty valve can affect the operation of the equipment

The article doesn't specifically say that a faulty valve can affect the operation of the equipment – but it implies it, because otherwise why would it need to be tested as part of the maintenance check?

You could perhaps infer that valves often become faulty (that's why they are checked) - however there is absolutely nothing in the article to suggest that valves often become corroded (as opposed to becoming blocked, or breaking).

There is no reason to infer that valves are difficult to replace.

Don't be afraid of 'cannot say' as an answer – you're not saying that you can't answer the question, you are saying that the passage doesn't give you the information you would need in order to answer the question! Again, resist temptation to fill in the gaps with information that isn't in the passage.

Watch out for slight differences in wording that change the certainty that something is true:

**Certain****Not certain!**

Must, have to, needs to

Should

Will

May, might

Are, is, does

Can, is likely to

All

Some

Always

Sometimes

The only way ...

The best way, the usual way, the cheapest way ...

Watch out for double negatives as these can be very confusing.

For example:-

“Firefighters have to deal with situations that could become dangerous if not managed properly. For this reason Health and Safety is a high priority at all incidents.

Managers are responsible for carrying out risk assessments at operational incidents, and these must be constantly reviewed as conditions change. However all staff have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of themselves and others. ‘Near misses should be reported as well as accidents, so that they can be investigated and hopefully prevent an accident in the future.’”

Q. Which of the following is false:-

- a) Health and safety is not a high priority
- b) Managers are not solely responsible for the health and safety of their team
- c) It is not just accidents that need to be reported

If you are getting confused, try removing swapping the question around:-

- a) Health & safety is not a high priority – is that true?
- b) Managers are not solely responsible for the health and safety of their team – is that true?
- c) It is not just accidents that need to be reported – is that true?

If you have dyslexia then you need to let us know what helps you – bigger print, cream background, reading ruler. Talk to us in advance so that we can make sure we have what you need.

There is a list of words attached that you might find useful, especially if English isn't your first language. It's not a comprehensive list of all the words used in the test but it should give you an idea of the level of language used. If you don't understand all the words on this list then you need to do some work. Reading will help provided that it is at the right level – The Sun newspaper is written for a reading age of 11 – try something more challenging like a broad sheet newspaper or a well-written classic novel!

## **Working with Numbers Test**

Take a few moments to study the information given and make sure you understand what it is telling you.

When you answer a question, double check that you are looking at the read part of the information (eg the right category, the right year).

Work out what you think the answer is before you look at the answers available.

You need to be familiar with some basic maths and types of numerical information:-

- Adding and subtracting numbers
- Multiplication of numbers of up to 3 digits.
  
- Tables and how to read them
- Graphs (bar charts, line charts) and how to read them
- Proportions – half, quarter, third etc
- Adding and working out differences in times (hours/minutes)

You will not be able to use a calculator, so the quicker you can do simple sums, the better. Practise by taking opportunities to do mental arithmetic, for example by calculating how much items add up to when you are shopping, and how much change you will get. Playing darts is good for both addition and multiplication. For calculations involving time, some people find it easiest to imagine a clock face.

Broadsheet newspapers sometimes have reports that include graphs or tables, especially in the financial or business section – or try your local library or the internet for things like labour market trends, housing market surveys or health & safety statistics.