

# Situational Judgement Tests

You may encounter 'Situational Judgement Tests' (SJTs) when applying for jobs or placements, as some employers use these to assess candidates' judgement when faced with solving work-related problems. SJTs present you with different work situations and several possible actions that you might take in response. Your task is to use your judgement to select the most effective of these responses; perhaps phrased as 'Which action would you be most likely to take in this situation?'. Variations of this could ask you to select the most and least effective actions, or possibly to rank each of the possible responses in order of effectiveness. Commonly done online, most SJTs do not have a time limit, but some may do.

In many cases, the tests have been specially commissioned by employers and are designed to replicate scenarios typical of the job and organisation you have applied to. Therefore, they test your responses to realistic situations where the employer knows what actions would work best and which would not. Bespoke tests like these are expensive to produce so SJTs have been relatively uncommon in graduate recruitment. However, there are also SJTs available which are not specific to one employer or occupation, making them cheaper for employers to purchase and meaning they are becoming more common.

Here is an example of a situational judgement question where you are asked to choose a preferred option. 'You are working at a housing advice centre. You overhear your colleague providing out of date information covering housing regulations to a client over the phone. Do you:

- A Interrupt your colleague to tell them that the regulations have changed, and give them an update.
- B Wait for the phone call to finish and then tell your colleague that regulations have changed and offer to update them.
- C Inform your line manager as it could be a training issue for all staff.
- D Email all your colleagues to update them on the new regulations.'

In this question we think A is the most appropriate answer as your first responsibility is to provide accurate information to clients. You could then email your colleagues and raise it as a training issue later.

## How to prepare

As with any application, you should research the organisation and the job so you know what kind of personal attributes they want. In particular, you need to understand the organisation's values and culture, and the typical demands of the job. This will help you judge what responses the employer might be looking for.

If you have work experience which is similar to the type of position or workplace you are applying to, this could help. Reflect on this experience as it may have given you some understanding of the typical work practices of employees you worked with, as well as the 'management style' within the organisation and the challenges faced by staff in their day-to-day work. Even if you don't have experience in the precise type of work you are applying to, other work experience in a similar *kind* of environment or occupation may be helpful e.g. if you've worked in an office, or in a sales/customer service role etc.

The best preparation is to use practice tests to give you a feel for different formats of tests and types of situations posed. Timed practice tests will give you an idea of how to manage your time as when it comes to your real test, you need to avoid having to rush answers at the end. Even with untimed tests, it's a good idea not to spend too long on any one question as often your initial response will be your most natural. A list of practice test websites and other information is provided at the end of this information sheet.

The best practice tests will be designed by qualified occupational psychologists simulating the ones used by major employers. A good practice test will also provide answers to the questions with explanations, helping you learn from any questions you get wrong.



## Tips for answering SJT questions

As we have seen, SJTs are multiple choice questionnaires which assess your ability to make the best decisions in situations you are likely to face.

So, when answering each item, you need to:

- read each situation carefully, looking at the details of each response
- think about the implications of the possible responses
- keep in mind the competencies the employer is seeking

It's important to realise that employers are seeking to not only assess your ability to identify the best actions to take in given situations, but also gain an insight into how *you* would typically act in those situations. This is especially the case in SJTs which ask you to select the actions you would most likely take. This is slightly different from asking you to judge what would be the most effective response to take, as it aims to get you thinking about your likely behaviour in each situation, thus providing an insight into your personality. For instance, while the best response to a given situation may be to confront a colleague who is acting unprofessionally, some people may admit that they would normally be reluctant to challenge someone in that way.

Therefore it's usually a good idea to answer the questions honestly, rather than just thinking about the 'best' response. Answering the questions based purely on what you think the recruiter wants you to say, rather than what you are most likely to do, could create a problem should you actually get the job, because if you are not really suited to the work it may well regularly place you in situations you feel uncomfortable in. A good SJT will reflect the realities of the work, so if the situations presented in the test are ones you would not enjoy, this can actually help you decide if the job is really for you. If this is the case, you should think about whether the situations are ones you could adapt to and become comfortable with, or whether you should look at alternative kinds of works that you would find more suitable.

## Practice tests and further information

**Graduates First** [www.shf.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/psychometric](http://www.shf.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/psychometric)

Our webpage on psychometric/selection tests gives you free access to the 'Graduates First' suite of practice assessment tests, which includes an SJT with 18 questions plus answers. You can create your own registration with Graduates First by following the 'Instructions for students' available on the above page.

**Assessment Day** [www.assessmentday.co.uk/situational-judgement-test.htm](http://www.assessmentday.co.uk/situational-judgement-test.htm)

Detailed article about SJTs plus downloadable pdf of example SJT with answers.

Also available, a free trial test (as at January 2017).

**Job Test Prep** [www.jobtestprep.co.uk/practice\\_situational\\_judgement](http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk/practice_situational_judgement)

Two free practice tests: a Graduate/Management SJT (12 questions) and a Sales/Customer service/Administration SJT (8 questions), each timed (30 mins) with explanations of answers and personal candidate report

**Open Psychometric Test Resources** [www.psychometrictest.org.uk/sjt](http://www.psychometrictest.org.uk/sjt)

Free SJT with 24 scenarios (NB: this is the same as the free trial test on the Assessment Day website listed above).

**Practice Aptitude Tests** [www.practiceaptitudetests.com/situational-judgement-tests](http://www.practiceaptitudetests.com/situational-judgement-tests)

A timed practice test with 8 questions.

## Practice tests/advice for specific opportunities

**Careers with the EU** Information for candidates for applying for jobs administered by the European Personnel Selection Office [http://europa.eu/epso/apply/sample\\_test/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/epso/apply/sample_test/index_en.htm)

**NHS Foundation Programme for Medical Students** Information for those applying for the Foundation Programme <http://sjt.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/sample>

**UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UK CAT)** Information for those taking the UK CAT as part of their applications for medical and dental training programmes [www.ukcat.ac.uk/about-the-test/situational-judgement](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk/about-the-test/situational-judgement)

## Articles with advice about SJTs

**Wiki Jobs** [www.wikijob.co.uk/content/aptitude-tests/test-types/situational-judgement-test](http://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/aptitude-tests/test-types/situational-judgement-test)

Advice and three example questions with answers.

**'Top 10 Tips for Situational Judgement Tests'**

[www.practiceaptitudetests.com/top-10-tips-pass-situational-judgement-test](http://www.practiceaptitudetests.com/top-10-tips-pass-situational-judgement-test)