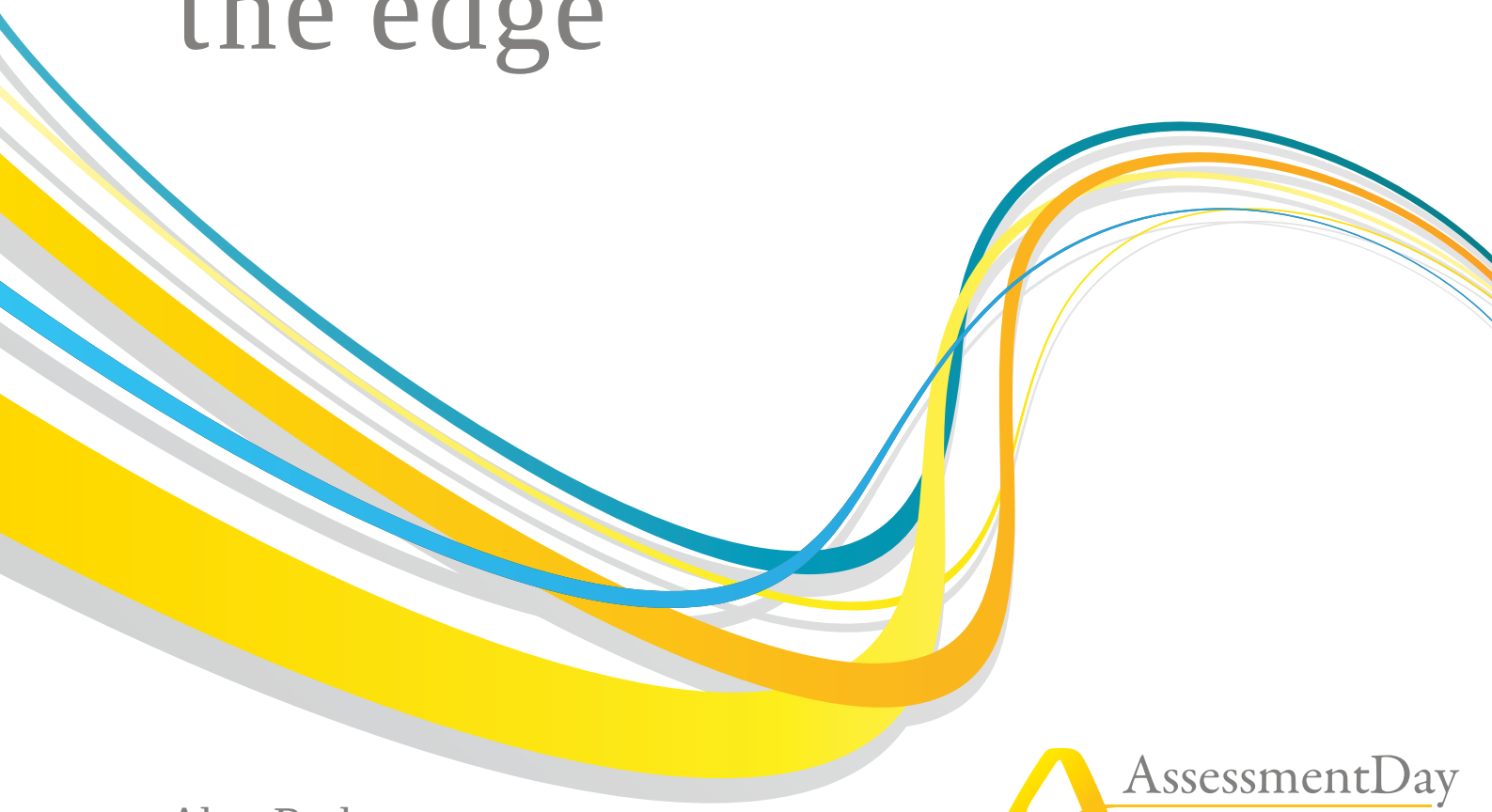
Trusted advice from the industry gurus

Numerical Reasoning Tests

How to give yourself the edge



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AssessmentDay
Practice Aptitude Tests

Numerical Reasoning Tests
How to give yourself the edge

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How this guide works

This guide will help you develop the skills, knowledge and strategies you need to demonstrate your strengths when taking numerical tests. It's a competitive job market out there and employers are increasingly turning to numerical tests to help them make choices about who to invite to interview. To maximise your chances of success in the hunt for a job you need to give yourself an edge by ensuring that your numerical test performance does not let you down. You should use this guide alongside the practice test questions on the AssessmentDay website to take your numerical test performance to its highest level.

This guide has been written by a charted occupational psychologist who is a director of a leading psychometric test publisher. By taking on- board the advice contained within this guide you will be getting expert coaching from a leading voice of the psychometric testing industry.

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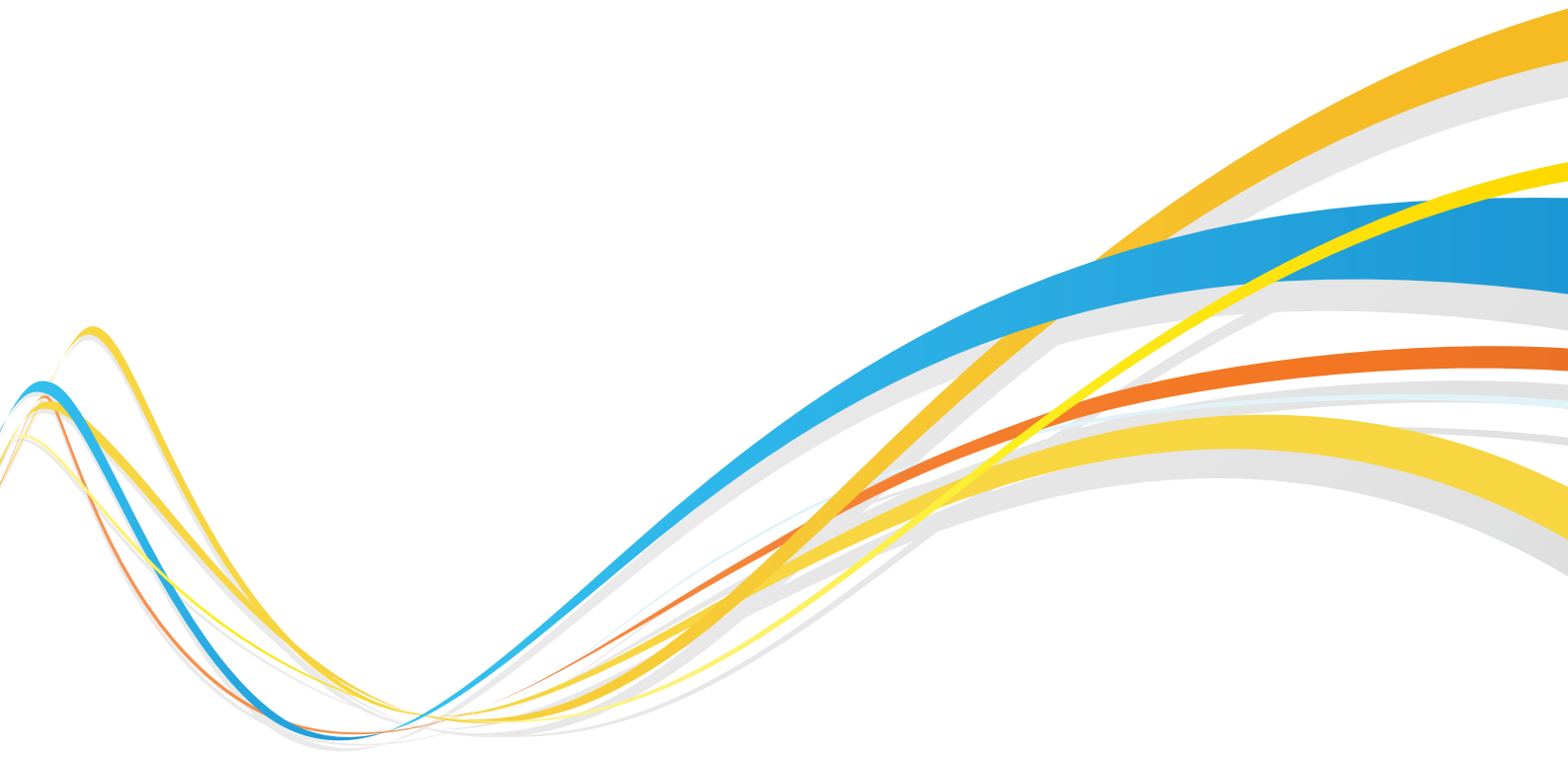

Section 1: Know what you're up against

The guide begins by orientating you in the current world of numerical testing. This section explains how the tests work, what numerical abilities they measure and a preview of the most widely used professional level tests used by employers today. This section includes:

1. How a numerical test works
2. What maths do I need to know?
3. What is high-level critical reasoning?
4. The top-five professional level numerical tests used by employers

Anyone who tells us "*you have nothing to fear but fear itself*" probably doesn't expect to be asked to complete a numerical test anytime soon. When you are required to sit a numerical test there can be plenty to fear; the prospect of not performing well enough and missing out on a great job opportunity. Then there is the fear of the test itself.

Numerical tests are the number one source of anxiety for most test takers. People seem to fear a numerical test much more than a verbal test, which is the other most commonly used test by employers. The fear can come from many places: previous poor numerical test results, stressful maths exams at school or college or fear of the unknown. Whatever its source, fear itself is a major obstacle to performing well in test.

Fear leads to anxiety; anxiety leads to stress and stress leads to the dark-side: under-performance and failure. So the first step in maximising your numerical test score is to deal with the fear; learn to laugh in its face. The best way to defuse the fear, anxiety and stress of taking a numerical test is through understanding. Once you know how they work, what skills you need and what the tests look like you can move away from fear and into confidence.

This section explains how the tests work, what numerical abilities they measure and give you a preview of the most widely used professional level tests used by employers today. With this knowledge in place you can put the fear to one side and focus on maximising your numerical test performance.

How a numerical test works

The great thing about numerical tests is that they are not the same as a maths test. Of course, they involve numbers and calculations but they are not trying to measure your maths ability in the same way as a school exam. This is great news for those of us with dark memories of impenetrable maths questions requiring skills like algebra, trigonometry and probabilities. Numerical tests do not require you to write out longhand answers; they do not require knowledge of formulae and theories; they do not require you to revise beforehand.

Numerical tests are fundamentally different from maths tests because of what they are built to measure. Rather than assess your understanding and application of a maths syllabus (such as GCSE or A-Level) they are designed to measure your ability to correctly interpret numerical information and use it to solve problems and make decisions. Modern tests base the information on real-life numerical data you would find in the workplace. So numerical tests only really require you to perform the kinds of analysis with numbers you'd be expected to perform at work.

This difference between maths exams and numerical tests means that sometimes people's scores from both are different. Employers often see candidates with great maths qualifications who demonstrate poor numerical test results. This is generally the result of the maths qualifications being pushed up by good exam technique, lots of revision and effective memory ability. The numerical test score is lower because it is not affected by exam technique, revision and memory; the numerical test relies on effective analysis, problem-solving and good test-taking technique, of which you will learn more in section 2 of this guide.

This is great news for those test-takers who have traditionally struggled with maths exams. Numerical tests are different - they measure different skills in a different way. Employers often see candidates with low or mediocre maths qualifications who can perform very well on the much more job-relevant numerical test.

As well a being different from maths exams, numerical tests tend to share a number of common characteristics, so you will always know what to expect. Common characteristics of numerical tests include:

- **Multiple choice answers** - no longhand answers or showing your working-out
- **Use of calculators permitted** - no mental arithmetic required
- **Strict time limits** - some are generous while some are very short (we cover this in section 2)
- **Example questions before you start the test** - these are not timed or scored
- **No prior knowledge required** - no equations to memorise (or surreptitiously write on your arm)
- **Relevant to the workplace** - modern tests are based on the kind of numerical information you would deal with in the job

Understanding how numerical tests work, how they are different from maths exams and their common characteristics should begin to dispel the fear of the unknown. Any remaining anxiety about your performance can be countered by developing a deeper understanding of the inner-workings of tests and, in section 2 of this guide, the most effective test taking techniques to develop based on this understanding.

What maths do I need to know?

Numerical tests are not the same as maths exams but you will still need some maths skills - you will be dealing with problems based on numbers after all. Fortunately for those of us with a less than warm relationship with maths the skills you need are far simpler than those expected by maths GCSE.

Here's a list of the most widely used maths calculations in numerical tests:

1. Addition
2. Subtraction
3. Multiplication
4. Division

5. Averages
6. Percentages
7. Ratios

If you are unfamiliar or unconfident with any of these maths skills you should focus your time on test practice questions that require the forms of calculation that trouble you. You could also look to use basic maths study aids to supplement your development through the practice questions.

Remember that you will be allowed to use a calculator during the numerical test to complete these calculations.

What is high-level critical reasoning?

Graduate and professional tests are at the top of the numerical-test tree as far as difficulty is concerned. These top-level tests measure the advanced skill of numerical critical-reasoning to reflect the demands of the jobs for which they are used to help recruit and the calibre of candidates who apply

The difficulty of these tests does not lie in the types of calculations you are required to perform; numerical critical-reasoning tests are still based around the seven basic maths skills described above. Their difficulty is the result of the complexity of the numerical data the questions are based upon and the nature of the problems you are required to solve.

Numerical critical reasoning is the ability to analyse and manipulate numerical information in order to draw inferences, determine underlying relationships and make decisions. These high-level tests are different from those you might be expected to complete for entry-level or mid-level roles because you are expected to demonstrated abilities that are above and beyond simply understanding numerical data and answering questions about it. Instead you will need to work in a more complex way to arrive at correct answers.

What this means in reality is that to answer a numerical critical-reasoning test you are often required to perform multiple calculations. In other words there may be several stages of calculation you need to

complete to reach an answer. Sometimes this even involves a degree of estimation or dealing with ambiguities, as you sometimes would at work.

If this sounds a little daunting don't worry. The calculations are still based on basic maths skills. You can maximise your score by developing effective test-taking technique (as described in section 2). You can complete some practice questions to get a preview of the demands presented by critical reasoning questions; they may not be as bad as you think!

The top-five professional level numerical tests used by employers

A good test-taking technique is to always ask an employer which test they use – it is best practice for test users to provide this kind of information so don't take no for an answer! Once you know which test the employer uses you can find out more about the assessment by looking at the test publisher's website; this may also provide additional practice questions.

If you are asked to complete a high-level numerical test in the UK it is likely to be one of the top-five used by employers. These are briefly described below along with some advice on where you can find out more.

1. SHL Verify Ability Tests

SHL are the most widely used test publisher by employers in the UK so you are likely to come up against their assessments when going for a job. SHL's professional level numerical test is drawn from their Verify series. The numerical test has a time limit between 17-25 minutes and you will need to work quickly to get through all the questions. You can find out more about the test on SHL's website (SHL.com).

2. Utopia numerical critical-reasoning test

This test is published by Criterion Partnership and contains numerical information relating to an environmental theme, but you don't need prior knowledge of green issues to perform well in the test. The

numerical test consists of 30 questions and you have a generous 45 minutes time-limit; most people attempt all of the test questions within the time limit, but beware because the questions get progressively harder. More information about the test and practice questions can be found at the Criterion Partnership website (criterionpartnership.co.uk). Criterion have also published a book for test for people taking a numerical test, which is available through Amazon: “Practise and Pass - Professional: Numeracy Tests” by Alan Redman.

3. Graduate-Management Assessment (GMA)

This is a very old numerical test published by Previsor; its age means that a lot of employers still use it, especially in the public sector and civil service. The test has 33 questions and a time limit of 30 minutes, which means that most candidates do not get time to attempt all the questions. You can find out more at previsor.co.uk.

4. Infinity Series Managerial and Graduate Ability Tests

This online test series is relatively new and so is not used in such a widespread way as those in the top 3, but its use may spread with time. The test varies the number of questions each candidate takes by taking your answers to the previous questions into account. The numerical test has around 20 questions and the time limit is 22 minutes (though this varies with the number of questions the test decides to give you). You can learn more at kenexa.com.

5. Bespoke numerical tests

Many larger employers, who deal with thousands of assessments each year, will use a bespoke numerical test that has been developed specifically for them. Bespoke tests have the advantage of containing subject matter that is specific to the role, which gives candidates a helpful insight into the types of numerical demands they might face in the job. Bespoke tests also contain questions that won’t be found in off-the-shelf tests. The employer should still provide you with information about the test. For practice questions you should use the AssessmentDay.co.uk website.

Section 2: Become a test-taking black belt

Section 2: Become a test-taking black-belt

When you're taking a numerical test, it's not all about maximum effort; it's about the right kind of effort in the right places. This section introduces you to the advanced test taking strategies you will develop to ensure that your test score is not dragged down by errors, slips and poor technique. Test-taking black-belts achieve their high scores by applying the numerical abilities they have developed through practice using the sharpest strategies. This section includes:

1. How strategies make the difference to your score
2. Preparing for your test
3. Timing and pacing - when to race and when to pause
4. Focus, nerves and concentration
5. Avoiding stupid mistakes
6. Why not cheat?
7. Online testing vs. paper and pencil tests

The conventional approach to increasing your score on a numerical test involves completing lots of practice questions. This can certainly help you to develop your numerical ability and increase your familiarity with test questions and confidence when taking a real test.

But if you really want to grow your test score to its maximum you need to ensure that your practicing is partnered by a focus on the development of your test-taking strategies. The only way to lift your test performance to its highest level is to make sure that your numerical ability is not let down by poor test-taking habits.

How strategies make the difference to your score

Two candidates can have equal levels of numerical ability, but one candidate can score significantly higher on a numerical test than the other. Why is this? Differences we see in people's test scores are often down to factors unrelated to their numerical ability, such as:

- Lack of familiarity with test taking
- Poor timing
- Stupid mistakes
- Nerves and anxiety

Candidates with high scores tend to posses high levels of numerical ability combined with effective test-taking strategies. These test-taking black belts know that when you're taking a numerical test, it's not all about maximum effort; it's about the right kind of effort in the right places.

This section introduces you to the advanced test-taking strategies you will develop to ensure that your test score is not dragged down by errors, slips and poor technique. Test-taking black-belts achieve their high scores by applying the numerical abilities they have developed through practice using the sharpest strategies. This section describes the winning strategies that can make a real difference to your numerical test performance.

Preparing for your test

Completing practice questions is an important part of effective preparation for taking a numerical test. But to really give yourself an edge there are a number of key preparation steps you should follow before you complete a numerical test:

➜ Find out more about the test

Ask the employer which numerical test you will be required to complete; you can also ask them if they can provide you with any practice or advice materials relating to the test they use. Take a look at the test publisher's website for any information relating to the test. Some employer's careers websites also contain help, advice and frequently asked questions for candidates.

➜ Get an early night

During the test you will need to draw on a focused burst of concentration. Numerical critical-reasoning tests place high demands

on your mental processing power and cognitive abilities. You will only be able to perform at your peak if you are well rested and physically prepared for the trials of the test. Don't stay up late before a test-taking session and avoid food or drink that may leave you feeling sluggish or fatigued. Your numerical ability can only be exploited fully if your body is ready for the challenge.

➜ Arrive in plenty of time

If you arrive at the test session flustered from running late your mind will not be in a good place for focusing your efforts on the test. The stress of arriving late is very likely to impact negatively on your test performance. Give yourself the edge by making sure you know where the test session is (getting lost *and* arriving late is a double whammy in stress terms) and make sure you arrive in good time to focus and calm yourself before the test session begins.

Focus, nerves and concentration

For many of us the worse part of taking a numerical test is the waiting beforehand. The nerves and anxiety we can experience before the test session can spill into the early stages of the test itself, affecting your focus and concentration. You need to maintain maximum concentration during the test session in order to perform at your best. Nerves and anxiety must be minimised before they cause mistakes and a dip in performance. Here are some tips for combating nerves and building focus prior to the test session:

➜ And breathe...

If you're feeling nervous then move your attention to your breathing. Ensure you are taking long, slow breaths and focus your mind on counting slowly down from 10 with each breath. Each time your mind wanders from breathing this countdown you should gently move the distracting thought to one side and begin the count again from 10. This focusing exercise reduces your stress levels and enables the parts of your mind devoted to concentration and reasoning to marshal its energies ready for the test itself.

Feel the fear and do it anyway

Sometimes our nerves and anxiety can cause distracting physical and mental symptoms of stress. A racing heart, sweaty palms and a mind full of chattering monkeys are common stress-related sensations, which make concentration and peak performance much harder to achieve. Rather than try to fight against these feelings you should use the 'acceptance and commitment technique' to move past them. Quiet your mind by moving around your body to notice, label and accept each of the stress related sensation you identify. Do not try to counteract them; simply acknowledge that they are there. Next you must work on your commitment; remind yourself of your objectives and then rehearse exactly what you are going to do when the test session begins. Acceptance and commitment technique helps you to feel the fear and do it anyway.

Ensuring that you are focused and calm will help you to employ the effective test-taking strategies during the test session itself that will give you the edge.

Effective test session behaviours

The biggest difference between the test-taking black-belt and the less experienced candidate is the test taking strategies employed during the test session itself. Taken individually these strategies appear disarmingly simple, but combined they create a powerful force for maximising your numerical test score.

Listen very carefully

The test administrator may say things only once so you need to attend fully to the instructions you are given. Typically the person delivering the test will read the instructions aloud while you read along at the same time from your test booklet. Do not allow yourself to read ahead or you are likely to miss a critical detail that the test administrator emphasises as they read it out. You will have opportunities to ask questions during this part of the test session – make sure you ask them if you have even the slightest worry or lack of clarity about the test and its instructions. It's better to ask an easily answered question than reduce your test score by making a stupid mistake based on a misunderstanding of the test instructions. You will not have the

opportunity to ask questions once the test has begun, so during the instructions it is critical that you listen with care and ask questions when necessary.

➜ Getting the most from example questions

Before taking the test itself you will generally get the chance to complete some example questions. These form part of the instructions stage of the test session and are designed to ensure that you understand the format for attempting the test questions and giving your answers. The example questions are not timed, they do not contribute to your final test score and you are told what the correct answers are before you begin the test itself. You are also allowed to ask questions about these examples. Black belt test-takers use the example questions section of the test session effectively by making sure they take the opportunity to ask any questions that they have about the test and its format. They are also careful not to panic if they are asked to have another go at any of the example questions.

➜ Don't worry about other people

The only person you are really competing with during a test session is yourself. The only test performance that matters is your own. Do not worry about how quickly or slowly other people are completing the test. Don't worry what other people might think of any questions you ask during the instructions part of the test session. Focus on your own performance not that of others.

➜ Don't get stuck

If you have trouble with a test question you should avoid spending too long over trying to work it out. Getting one question wrong will have less impact on your overall performance than devoting too much time to it and answering fewer questions correctly overall. If you get stuck it is better to move on to the remaining questions in the test. You can return to the question you skipped if you have any time left at the end of the test.

➜ Don't guess

There may be questions in the numerical test that you simply can't answer. You should always give an answer (you might get it correct by

chance) but you should never simply guess – you should use the multiple-choice format of numerical tests to your advantage. Most numerical tests give you a choice of 5 answers for each question to choose from. In an ideal world you calculate your answer and find it matches one of the multiple-choice options. But if you can't work it out then you need to take an educated guess, which is different from simply guessing.

If you simply guess you have a one-in-five chance of getting the right answer (that's a 20% chance of scoring a mark or an 80% probability of getting it wrong!). What you need to do is boost your chances by eliminating any of the multiple-choice answers that you can see are obviously wrong. Test developers design the incorrect multiple-choice options to be distracting in order to camouflage the identity of the correct answer. These incorrect answers are called 'distracters' for this reason. Some distracters are fairly obviously wrong while others are closer to the right answer.

For most numerical questions there will be two or three distracters that are more obviously wrong; try to identify these first so you can focus on the remaining couple of answers. One of these is the correct one. You have increased your changes from one-in-five to one-in-two of picking the right answer. You should pick the answer from the two (or sometimes three) that are not obviously wrong on the basis of which one looks most likely. You can use some estimation or a sense from the numerical information on which the question is based of which answer looks correct.

It may still ultimately be a guess but it is an educated guess. And sometimes at work as in tests that's what we are required to take, which makes it a valuable element of your numerical ability.

➜ Timing and pacing - when to race and when to pause

The general advice for pacing yourself when completing tests is to work quickly and accurately and not to dwell too long on any single question. Test-taking black belts deploy a more sophisticated range of strategies in terms of timing and pacing.

With a high-level numerical critical-reasoning test the rule of thumb is 1 minute per question. Some questions will not take as long as this while others will; but on average this 1 minute per question is broadly

appropriate for most numerical tests. A word of warning though; don't distract yourself by focusing on timing yourself at the expense of concentrating on your answers.

A more sophisticated strategy is to vary your pace rather than time your answers. This requires you to identify what type of numerical test you are completing. There are two types:

- **Speed tests** – these tests have more questions than you could possibly answer in the time available. If the total number of questions is greater than the time limit then the test breaks the 1 minute per question rule. This makes it a speed test – it is designed to put you under time pressure and candidates are not generally expected to have time to attempt all the questions within the time limit.

- **Power tests** – these tests have a generous time limit, more than 1 minute per question. This means that candidates are generally expected to attempt all the questions in the test within the time allowed. Sometimes power tests do not have a time limit at all.

To pace yourself effectively you should vary your approach depending on whether you are completing a speed test or a power test.

- **Completing a speed test** – you do need to work quickly and not spend an undue amount of time on any single question. The questions themselves will not vary too much in terms of difficulty. You should not rush the test by trying to complete all the questions. It is better to work steadily through the majority of questions (half to two-thirds) and get lots of correct answers than answer all the questions but make lots of mistakes.

- **Completing a power test** – you do not need to race but need to maintain a steady pace. You will have time to attempt all the questions if you stick to the general 1 minute per question rule but watch-out; the questions will get progressively more difficult as you complete the test. You will find yourself gradually slowing down as you get nearer the end of the test as the complexity of the questions increase.

Avoiding stupid mistakes

To really give yourself an edge when taking a numerical test you must be on guard for the type of stupid mistakes that drag down your total test score and leave your real numerical ability being grossly misrepresented. Often these mistakes are caused by nerves or a lack of test-taking experience. As a test-taking black belt you should watch out for these common stupid mistakes.

- **Being a sucker** – all of the incorrect multiple-choice options are designed to be distracting, but some are more distracting than others. The test publisher will include distracters that are common wrong answers – they are almost there to tempt you into making a wrong choice. Avoid being suckered into picking these wrong answers by making sure that your calculations fully answer the question; check you haven't missed out a vital last step in your working-out.

- **Losing your way** – a fair number of candidates lose their place on the answer sheet (or even on-screen for computer based tests) and put their answers against the wrong question. This sometimes means that many of the questions end up being scored as incorrect if the candidate does not notice the mistake; if they do notice a significant amount of valuable test-taking time can be wasted correcting the error. Always make sure that the place where you are giving your answer corresponds with the number of the question you are answering.

- **Sausage fingers** – slips on the calculator cause errors, delays and incorrect answers. These sorts of errors are avoidable if you take care with the calculator and don't miss-key the buttons.

Check your answers

Even test-taking black belts can make mistakes. If you have some time left over at the end of the test (before the time limit is up) you should use it to good effect. Using extra time to check your answers is a powerful test taking strategy, especially with numerical tests where a simple error leads to a wrong answer. You can start with questions you find difficult or perhaps weren't able to answer earlier in the test session (sometimes the tight lid on a jar becomes looser if you leave it and try again later). But you should also take time to check your

answers to the questions you found easy – sometimes the easy answer is the wrong answer.

Online testing vs. paper and pencil tests

Many employers now use online tests rather than traditional paper & pencil tests, especially for professional level testing. Most of the test taking strategies that apply to paper & pencil tests can be transferred directly to taking an online test. However, there are a few test-taking strategies that are specific to online tests.

- **Find a quiet test-taking environment** – online tests tend to be completed remotely and are unsupervised. That means you will be taking it at a location of your own choosing. This could be your home or office or a library or internet-café if you have no access to the web. Wherever the location you must ensure that the immediate testing environment is as quiet and distraction-free as possible. Make sure you won't be disturbed by phone calls or other people. Pick a time of day when you feel at your best.

- **Use an up-to-date internet browser** – make sure that the computer you are using has the most recent version of your browser installed. Generally speaking online tests prefer a minimum of Internet Explorer 7 to run properly. If you use a different browser (such as Firefox or Chrome) make sure it is the most recent version. You should also remove any custom security settings you might have specified and switch off any other software that may interfere with the test, such as pop-up blockers and internet security suites. Accelerator software (designed to speed-up slower internet connections) can also cause problems to the way online tests behave.

Why not cheat?

It may seem like a tempting test-taking strategy, especially if you're asked to complete an unsupervised online test. However you should be aware that most online tests contain a number of measures to minimise and detect your efforts to cheat:

- **Randomisation** – online tests will typically present a random selection of questions to each candidate. So trying to take the test more than once or finding the 'correct' answers from someone who has taken the test before are likely to be ineffective.

- **Verification of results** – if an employer asks you to complete an online test remotely and unsupervised then they will check the results at a later stage of the recruitment process. This typically means some form of re-testing to make sure that your online test results are an accurate reflection of your numerical test ability. So it's no good getting help during your online test; your genuine numerical ability will be assessed later on.

Section 3: Developing your numerical ability

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Completing practice questions will help improve your score but you also need to develop a strategy. While practice is an essential part of developing your numerical test performance you need to make sure that you are developing your ability to its full potential. This section will help you get the most from practice questions by ensuring that the work you put in is translated into real learning that enhances your test scores. This section includes:

1. Key numerical abilities to develop
2. Moving your score upwards
3. Where else to practice

To give yourself the edge in numerical test performance you can develop your test-taking strategies to black belt level and you can complete practice questions. While both approaches are an essential part of developing your numerical test performance you need to make sure that you are developing your underlying numerical ability to its full potential. This section will help you get the most from your development through practice and test strategies by ensuring that the work you put in is translating in real improvements in the numerical abilities that enhance your test scores.

Key numerical abilities to develop

Section 1 of this guide described the range of maths techniques that numerical ability tests draw upon. In order to develop your actual numerical ability you need to become confident in applying these forms of calculation. Developing these maths techniques will strengthen your numerical ability and therefore increase your test scores.

To maximise your performance on high level numerical tests you also need to develop confidence a range of other numerical skills:

- Interpreting graphs and charts

- Interpreting pie charts
- Working with financial data such as costs and sales figures
- Estimation

If you are completing practice questions you should find this range of numerical skills being covered. You can deepen your degree of experience in these techniques by looking for opportunities at work or college to use the skills for real.

Moving your score upwards

To develop your numerical ability to its full potential through practice you should make sure that you learn from your mistakes. When reviewing your answers against the correct ones provided with the practice questions you should spend time with each wrong answer to identify:

- **Where did you go wrong?** – review the approach you took and find the errors
- **What was the correct approach to the question?** – reattempt the question until you get it right
- **Is there a pattern to your mistakes?** – if you tend to make similar errors, perhaps in arithmetic or interpretation of tables of data for example. Identify your weak spots and learn to compensate

You will gain greater benefit from completing a small number of practice questions and learning from your mistakes than completing a huge volume and not taking time to embed the learning that is available through your wrong answers. Ideally you should complete lots of practice questions and make sure you spend time reviewing your answers.

Practice questions can be a powerful way of increasing your underlying numerical ability and your test score as a result.

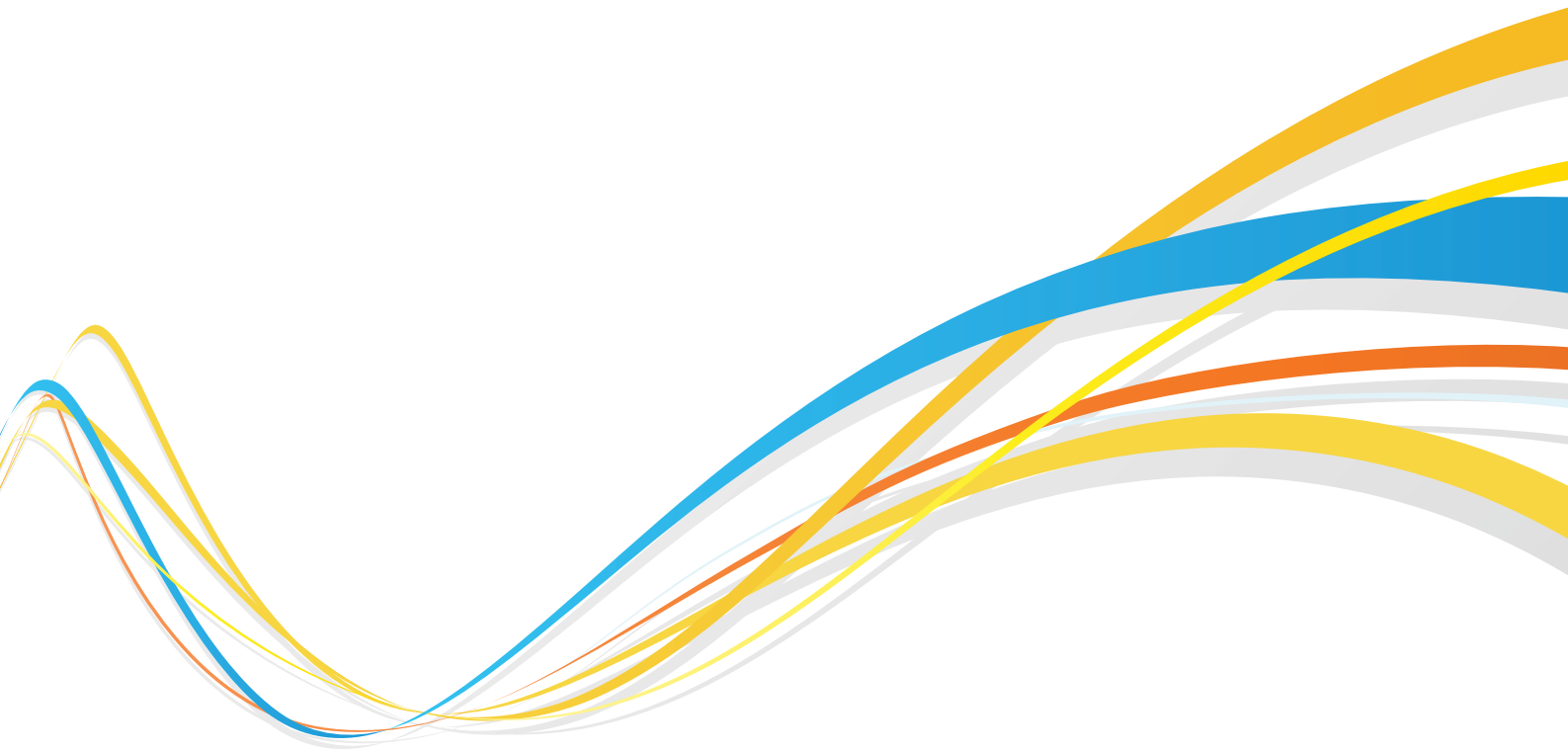
Where else to practice

As well as completing practice questions you can develop your underlying numerical ability in a number of alternative ways:

- Attempt complex number puzzles
- Perform calculations in your head – the more complex the better
- Reconcile your bank account each month
- Perform financial analyses at work
- Analyse other forms of numerical data, such as performance results, trend data or statistics

Ideally you should look for opportunities to perform numerical techniques in your day-to-day life. This will develop your numerical ability in the same way that exercising any muscle on a daily basis will take it stronger. Taking this approach will not only help move your test score upwards; it will also develop your numerical strengths in a way that is attractive to employers and increases your performance levels at work.

Section 4: Your rights as a test-taker



Section 4: Your rights as a test-taker

This final section describes the further help and support you should expect to receive from any prospective employer who requires you to take a test. Understanding your rights to further preparation, help with adjustments and feedback will help you maximise your test performance with the employer and on any future numerical tests you are asked to complete. This section includes:

1. What the employer should tell you up front about the test
2. Should your test be adjusted?
3. What to do if the test session goes badly
4. What happens to your test score
5. What to do about test score feedback

As a test taker you have certain rights to help and support from any prospective employer who requires you to take a test. Understanding your rights to further preparation, help with adjustments and feedback will help you maximise your test performance with the employer and on any future numerical tests you are asked to complete.

What the employer should tell you up front about the test

Any employer who asks you to take a test as part of a recruitment process must gain your informed consent to be tested. This means you must be informed about every aspect of the testing process and agree to these conditions. To become fully informed the employer must provide the following information prior to the test session:

- The nature of the test you will take – what the test measures
- Why the test is being used – its relevance to the job
- How the test scores will be used – their role in the selection decision
- Who will have access to the results

- How long the results will be retained
- Will you be provided with feedback?

You must be happy with all of the information the employer provides in order to consent to be tested. Some employers will ask for formal consent; they may ask you to write and confirm that you're happy to proceed. Most employers will assume that you give your informed consent if you turn-up to be tested. In either case, you must raise any issues you have with the employer's testing process **before** you take the test. Complaining about the process later on will carry less weight than a challenge at the right time, which is before you consent.

Should your test be adjusted?

If you believe that you have a condition that requires the employer to make adjustments to parts of the recruitment process, including the test, you must inform the employer before you take part. Not every test requires adjustment; many modern tests are designed to be appropriate and fair to all candidates. However, it is once again too late in terms of your test-taking rights to complain about the absence of an adjustment after the test has taken place.

What to do if the test session goes badly?

If a test goes badly for reasons beyond your control then you must inform the employer straightaway. If you feel that your test score was distorted by the testing conditions, nerves or other issues you need to tell the employer immediately so that they can act on your concerns. Depending on the nature of the circumstances the employer may choose to offer to test you again or take the issues into account when interpreting the score.

What happens to your test score

The Data Protection Act in the UK forms the basis for what should happen to your test score:

- It should only be used as part of the recruitment decision – it must not be used for any purpose beyond those described before you took the test
- Your score should only be seen by those people involved in the recruitment process – again this should be confirmed prior to the test going ahead
- Your score must not be retained for longer than necessary – if you do not get the job this will be at least 6 months

What to do about test score feedback

If the employer offered you feedback prior to being tested then you have a right to expect feedback to be provided. This may take the form of a telephone call, a face-to-face meeting or a written report. You should always take advantage of an offer of test feedback; it may provide you with valuable information to help you develop your test-taking approach in future.

If the employer did not offer feedback before the test you can still request it; there's no harm in asking.

A final word

Nobody likes being tested and numerical tests in particular tend to be a widely feared type of test. Try to remember that the test is there to help you find the right job for you as well as helping the employer identify the strongest candidates. Numerical tests are one of the most reliable and fair ways of assessing people's suitability for a job. If your performance during a recruitment process means you do not get the job it can be a real benefit – you do not want to end up in a job with demands you are not fully equipped to meet or with an employer who cannot recognise your latent qualities.

Developing your numerical test taking skills will help you sail more easily through that part of a recruitment process and should also help you to develop your underlying numerical ability, which will benefit you inside and outside of the workplace.

Good luck!

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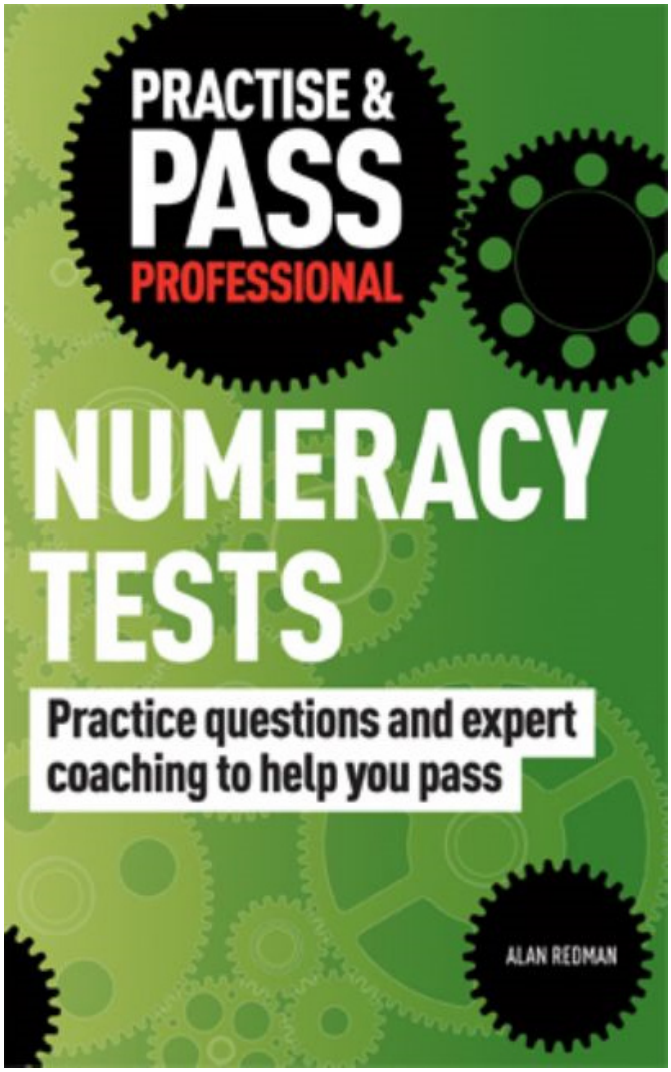

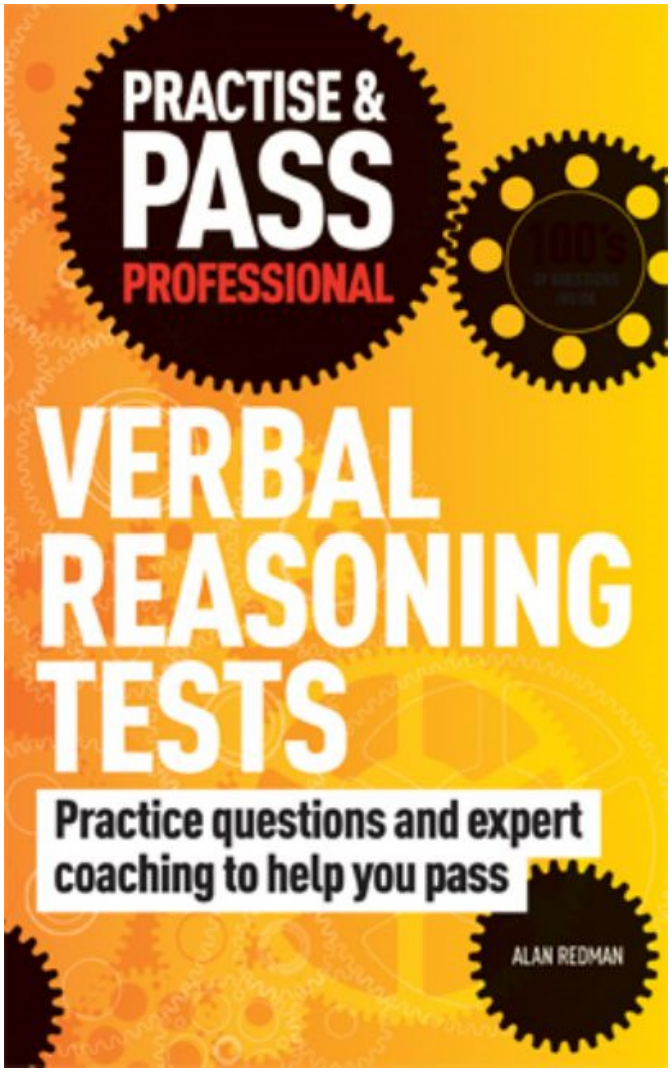

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