Verbal reasoning tests

By Catherine Cooper-White

What is a verbal reasoning test?

It is a form of aptitude test used by some law firms and in-house legal departments to find out how well a candidate can assess verbal logic. This objective selection method is a useful way for these organisations to compare an individual against their peer group.

What tests are used by law firms?

SHL tests are most likely to be used as SHL is the most well-known and widely used producer of verbal reasoning tests. However some law firms are now using Critical Thinking assessments to test candidates at all levels. The most common Critical Thinking assessments are produced by Watson Glaser.

What is the format of the SHL test?

In a verbal reasoning test, you are typically provided with a passage, or several passages, of information and required to evaluate a set of statements by selecting one of the following possible answers:

True - The statement follows logically from the information or opinions contained in the passage
False - The statement is logically false from the information or opinions contained in the passage
Cannot Say - Cannot determine whether the statement is true or false without further information

You are to assume that all the information in each of these written passages is true, and you should only use the information in each passage to work out your answer. Candidates should not use prior knowledge when answering verbal reasoning questions.

There is a sample test question on SHL's website. It is significantly easier than the actual test questions are likely to be but does give an insight into the structure of the questions.

The sample question can be found here.

What is the format of the Watson Glaser test?

The **Watson Glaser** critical thinking aptitude test is an assessment tool used to measure an individual's critical or logical thinking skills.

The Watson Glaser test measures a candidate's abilities in:

- **Drawing inferences**: the ability to evaluate the validity of inferences drawn from a series of factual statements.

- **Recognising assumptions**: the ability to identify unstated assumptions or presuppositions in a series of assertive statements.

- **Argument evaluation**: the ability to determine whether certain conclusions necessarily follow from the information in given statements or premises.

- **Deductive reasoning**: the ability to weigh evidence and deciding if generalisations or conclusions based on the given data are warranted.

- **Logical interpretation**: the ability to distinguish between arguments that are strong and relevant and those that are weak or irrelevant to a particular question at issue.

You can access detailed information and a number of free Watson Glaser practice tests on the Assessment Day website, without needing to provide personal details, here.

Tips for Candidates

- Work out how much time you can spend on each question and make sure it does not take you longer than this;

- Be very careful - the questions are designed to trick you;

- If displayed, read the question(s) before you read the text, so you know what you are looking for;

- Do not use any general knowledge when answering questions. Everything you need to answer the question is included in the passage; and

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- Try to ensure that you get enough sleep before sitting the test as tiredness can affect performance.

Where else can I practice the tests?

Both the SHL and the WikiJob websites have sample practice tests which you can attempt as many times as you like.

SHL - verbal reasoning tests
WikiJob - verbal reasoning tests

Practicing test questions in order to familiarise yourself with the format of the exercises should give you a good idea of what to expect, enabling you to perform better under time pressure on the day.

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