



The  
British  
Psychological  
Society

# Psychometric Testing for people with a hearing impairment



## Do you have any guidelines for testing people with a hearing impairment?

We do not yet have any guidelines for hearing impairment. The Psychological Testing Centre (PTC) and Steering Committee on Test Standards (SCTS) have always promoted that the test user should contact the publisher directly for advice on help that can be given to anyone who has a disability that will affect their performance on a test. It is difficult to give general advice to someone when nothing is known about the circumstances, but there is some support for particular situations.

### Candidates who use sign language

If a candidate has been deaf from an early age there is a question regarding whether spoken English or sign is their primary language. It will depend what sort of test is being used and what it is intended to measure, but the test user should review the appropriateness of using the particular test with someone for whom English is not the first language.

### Candidates who can read

Assuming that the test takers are able to read and this may not be true if they are deaf from a very early age, the employer should supply a practice leaflet so that they can check whether they can manage the test in its normal form.

### Following instructions and examples and raising questions about these

If it appears that the candidates can manage the practice questions or items then it would be helpful for them to have a copy of the administration instructions in front of them, when the instructions for the test are being read out.

For a **paper-based version** of a test, the important instructions are usually printed on the question book or answer sheet. Normally there are also examples of the questions or items, which the candidates can ask about if they are not clear. Candidates should be able to follow the instructions and ask about any examples that they do not understand.

If it is a **computer-administered test** then the instructions and examples will be there for them. If it is a **paper-based version** it will require the administrator to ensure beforehand that copies of the instructions are available. Candidates may like to communicate questions arising from the instructions and examples using written notes – if so this should be facilitated.

## Timing the test

If it is a **computer-administered test** then any timing will be automated. If it is not a computer-administered test then the administrator should agree a start and stop signal that the candidates can perceive easily. Often tapping on candidates' desks or shoulders works well.

## Should there be a signer to help with the test administration?

It is not appropriate for a signer to interpret the questions or items in a written test, as this constitutes translation and cannot be effectively done while preserving the nature of the test. However, a signer may be useful for interpreting the administration instructions and generally managing the testing situation.

## The Employer's responsibility

The employer has a duty to make reasonable accommodations if candidates have a disability (under the broad definition of the law), whether candidates are registered disabled or not. If there is someone who uses sign language then that person will almost certainly come within the definition of the Disability Discrimination Act. Employers and candidates can contact the Equality and Human Rights Commission for advice.

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