



CANDIDATE PREPARATION

Completing a general ability test

Dr. Sarah Burke



TABLE OF CONTENTS

 www.podium365.com/candidate-practice

Introduction	2
Before starting	3
During the assessment.....	4
After the assessment	4
A word about honesty.....	5
Verbal reasoning	6-9
Numerical reasoning.....	10-13
Abstract reasoning.....	14-15

INTRODUCTION

Chances are you have picked up this booklet because you need to complete an assessment for a role you have applied for. More specifically, you need to complete a general reasoning exercise.

Most organisations only invite a shortlisted candidate to the assessment testing stage, so congratulations on making it this far!

What does this booklet cover?

This booklet has been carefully designed to support your preparation for a general ability assessment covering areas of verbal, numerical, and abstract reasoning. Whether you've taken similar tests before or this is your first time, our goal is to provide you with a broad understanding of what to expect and some practical tips to help you get ready.

We know that assessment tests can sometimes feel daunting, but with the right preparation, you can approach the challenge with confidence. This guide will cover the key areas you're likely to encounter, as well as test-taking strategies and advice on how to stay focused under pressure.

Not an exhaustive summary of all reasoning tests

This is not an exhaustive summary of all the types of test questions you may encounter during your assessment, but it should provide a helpful overview of the most common ones. Assessments often vary in format and focus depending on the organisation and the role you're applying for.

While this guide highlights the key areas of verbal, numerical, and abstract thinking, you may also be asked to tackle other forms of problem-solving or critical thinking exercises. These assessments are not covered here.

Getting test-wise

This booklet is not designed to coach you on how to 'beat' a general ability assessment but to give you practical experience to build test confidence and know-how. In other words, help to get you test-wise. Our aim is to help you become familiar with the format and types of questions you may encounter so you can approach the assessment with a calm and prepared mindset.

By focusing on skill development and understanding rather than shortcuts or tricks, it also means you'll be better equipped to showcase your true abilities and genuine potential.

Take a deep breath and let's get started!

BEFORE STARTING

(a general reasoning assessment)

Understand the assessment format

- Before starting an assessment, check the number of questions and time limit.
- Traditional reasoning tests tend to present blocks of questions that are similar (i.e., 20 verbal questions, then 20 numerical questions). Newer assessments tend to mix question types.
- Podium's general cognitive ability test (i.e., GCAT) is designed in such a way that you are unlikely to get the same questions as anyone else.
- Ability tests are often designed not to be finished, so don't panic if time runs out before you finish.
- The GCAT includes questions of varying difficulty; so while some questions might be easy for you to answer, some questions may be a bit harder.

Practice, practice, practice

- Use the Podium practice test link to get a good sense of what you will encounter when completing the actual assessment.
- Focus on time management while practicing.

Check your tech setup

- Ensure a stable internet connection and a fully charged laptop/PC.
- If needed, update your browser and clear any distractions on your computer (e.g., turn off notifications).

Find a quiet, comfortable space

- Choose a well-lit room free from distractions.
- Inform others in your household about your assessment to avoid interruptions.
- Switch off your phone.

Get rest and stay relaxed

- Get a good night's sleep the night before you choose to complete the assessment.
- You do not need to complete Podium assessments in one sitting, so take a break between completing each exercise.
- If you have multiple assessments to complete, maybe start with an untimed assessment first so you can get comfortable with the test layout and test site itself.

DURING THE ASSESSMENT

Follow instructions carefully

- Read all directions thoroughly before starting.
- Note any time limits or specific requirements for each section.

Manage your time

- Keep track of time, but don't rush. Both your speed and accuracy are taken into account.
- If you get stuck, skip a question and return to it later if there's time.
- Don't sit on one question, when you could maybe have answered another two or three more.

Go back and review your answers

- If possible, review your answers to avoid mistakes.
- Don't spend too much time rethinking answers if time is short—go with your best judgment and first response.

AFTER THE ASSESSMENT

Reflect on the experience

- Consider the questions that were most challenging and think about how you handled them.
- Think about what else you can do to prepare in the event you have the option to re-sit these (or other assessments) in the future.

Follow up

- Follow up with the organisation who requested testing to confirm the next steps in the process, when you be contacted, and any additional directions or application guidelines.

Analyse and practice

- Ask about assess to a post-assessment feedback report (if available).
- Keep refining your skills for future assessments based on this experience.

Stay positive and move forward

- Whether or not the assessment went as planned, take it as a learning opportunity.
- Continue honing your skills for future opportunities and celebrate the fact that you've gained valuable experience.
- Assessment testing is often one part of a much bigger process so you will have other opportunities to showcase your skills and abilities.

A WORD ABOUT HONESTY

Smart tests

- Modern assessment technologies – such as that used by Podium are designed to detect attempts at cheating or the use of external tools such as Google or ChatGPT.
- Any evidence of cheating behaviour can be reported to the organisation which requested your testing, which may impact your candidacy.

Best practices

- Approach each question with your own knowledge and skills to ensure the most accurate reflection of your abilities.
- While AI and ChatGPT can be a helpful tool in many cases, it does make errors and can misunderstand what you are wanting to know. Relying on AI may lead to a lot of valuable time wasting.

Why answering honestly matters

- Demonstrating honesty during your assessment helps build trust with potential employers and showcases your commitment to ethical standards.
- By answering the questions honestly, you also demonstrate that you have the ability to perform under real-world conditions.
- Relying on external aids or cheating in an ability test may lead to short-term success but can result in underperformance in the actual job role, where real-time decision-making is critical.

VERBAL REASONING

Verbal reasoning is the ability to understand, interpret, and analyse written information. It involves processing language-based content to identify relationships and solve problems. Verbal reasoning tests can take a range of forms. Typically, they include the ability to interpret the meaning behind words and phrases to assess your comprehension skills.

In many roles, especially those requiring problem-solving, decision-making, and communication, verbal reasoning is critical. Employees often need to read, analyse, and act on written reports and instructions as well as understand verbal communication. Verbal reasoning assessments help determine a candidate's ability to do this effectively.

General tips on approaching verbal reasoning questions

- **Read the passage carefully:** Take your time to thoroughly read the passage or statement provided. Ensure you understand the main ideas before attempting to answer the question.
- **Understand the question:** Carefully read each question to determine exactly what is being asked. Look for keywords that indicate whether you need to complete the sequence, find a missing word, or comprehend a word meaning.
- **Look for context clues:** Pay attention to the context in which words or phrases are used. Understanding the surrounding text can help clarify the meaning of ambiguous terms or concepts.
- **Eliminate wrong answers:** Use the process of elimination to narrow down your choices. Discard options that are clearly incorrect, which increases the likelihood of selecting the correct answer.
- **Practice active reading:** In your own reading, practice by summarizing paragraphs in your own words, predicting what might come next, and asking yourself questions about the content. This can improve comprehension and retention.
- **Expand your vocabulary:** A strong vocabulary can enhance your understanding of verbal reasoning questions. Regular reading and vocabulary exercises can be beneficial.

Below are four typical types of verbal reasoning questions. Each of these will be dealt with in turn.

- **Synonyms** - Find a word of similar meaning
- **Antonyms** - Find a word of opposite meaning
- **Odd-one-out** - Find a word that is dissimilar to the rest
- **Analogies** - Identify the relationship between words

These types of questions are designed to assess your ability to understand the meaning of words and the relationship between words.

Synonyms and antonyms

Synonyms are words that have the same or very similar meanings. For example, “happy” and “joyful” are synonyms because they both describe a positive feeling. Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings. For example, “hot” and “cold” are antonyms because they describe two different, opposing temperatures.

So, synonyms = same meaning; antonyms = opposite meaning. Some examples are below.

1. What word is most similar in meaning to START?

- Begin
- End
- Finish
- Stop

Answer: a) Begin

2. What word is most similar in meaning to PERSEVERE?

- Quit
- Persist
- Hesitate
- Delay

Answer: b) Persist

3. What word is most similar to OBSCURE?

- Clear
- Hidden
- Bright
- Simple

Answer: b) Hidden

4. What word is opposite in meaning to ENLARGE?

- Expand
- Extend
- Reduce
- Amplify

Answer: c) Reduce

Odd-one-out

Odd-one-out type questions ask you to find the item that is different or doesn't belong in a group. In these questions, you're given a list of words, pictures, or numbers, and you need to figure out which one is different from the others based on some shared characteristic.

The key in this type of question is to look for a common theme or category among the items and identify which one doesn't fit. Some examples are below.

1. Which of the following is the odd one out ...?

- a. Sun
- b. Moon
- c. Star
- d. River

Answer: d) River (because it's a body of water, while the others are celestial objects)

2. Which of the following is the odd one out?

- a. Gold
- b. Silver
- c. Platinum
- d. Granite

Answer: d) Granite (the first three options; gold, silver, platinum are precious metals, while granite is a type of rock).

3. Which of the following is the odd one out...?

- a. Mercury
- b. Venus
- c. Earth
- d. Sun
- e. Jupiter

Answer: d) Sun (because it is a star, while the others are planets)

Analogies

An analogy is a way of comparing two things that are different but share something in common. It helps explain or clarify an idea by showing how it is like something else that is easier to understand. For example, if you say:

"A car is to a driver as a bike is to a rider."

This analogy is showing the relationship between a car and its driver (someone who controls the car) is similar to the relationship between a bike and its rider (someone who controls the bike). Even though cars and bikes are different, the relationship between the two pairs is the same: both need someone to operate them. So, analogies are useful for explaining things by highlighting similar relationships between two pairs of things.

Some examples are below.

1. Fire is to Heat as Ice is to:

- a. Water
- b. Cold
- c. Snow
- d. Melt

Answer: b) Cold (because fire produces heat, and ice produces cold)

2. Doctor is to Hospital as Teacher is to:

- a. Office
- b. Classroom
- c. Book
- d. Student

Answer: b) Classroom (because a doctor works in a hospital, and a teacher works in a classroom)

3. Foot is to knee as hand is to:

- a. Finger
- b. Elbow
- c. Toe
- d. Leg
- e. Arm

Answer: b) Elbow. The relationship is that the foot is connected to the knee, just as the hand is connected to the elbow.

4. Day is to second as year is to:

- a. Minute
- b. Month
- c. Week
- d. Day
- e. Hour

Answer: d) Day. A day consists of seconds, just as a year consists of days

NUMERICAL REASONING

In the world of work, numerical reasoning can help someone analyse and interpret data, make informed decisions, and solve problems efficiently. Even with the use of calculators, ChatGPT, and other aids, you still need to understand how an answer was calculated and know when a number just doesn't look "right".

Most numerical reasoning assessments require you to demonstrate your ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide. Other questions may require you to understand percentages, fractions, odd-one-out problems, and number sequences. You might find it helpful to brush up on these everyday types of numerical problems, particularly if you haven't used this skill a lot since leaving school.

General tips for approaching numerical reasoning questions

- **Practice basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division:** Ensure you can do these operations quickly and accurately.
- **Fractions and percentages:** Be comfortable converting between fractions, decimals, and percentages.
- **Basic algebra:** Practice solving simple equations in word format.
- **Practice mental maths:** Practice solving numerical problems in your head as much as possible without relying on a calculator. This will help increase your speed during the test.
- **Familiarise yourself with word problems:** Numerical reasoning tests often include word problems that require you to interpret the situation and set up the correct mathematical equation.
- Practice reading word problems carefully to identify the key information.

Time and distance

Time and distance math problems are designed to assess the ability to apply logical thinking and mathematical reasoning to real-world situations based on speed, distance, and time. Below are some time and distance sample questions.

1. A car travels at a speed of 60 kilometers per hour (km/h). How far will it travel in 2 hours?

Answer: Distance = $60 \text{ km/h} \times 2 \text{ hours} = 120 \text{ kilometers}$

2. A person walks at a speed of 5 kilometers per hour. How long will it take to walk 20 kilometers?

Answer: Time = $20 \text{ kilometers} \div 5 \text{ km/h} = 4 \text{ hours}$

3. A cyclist covers 30 kilometers in 2 hours. What is the speed of the cyclist?

Answer: Speed = $30 \text{ kilometers} \div 2 \text{ hours} = 15 \text{ kilometers per hour}$

Number series

A common form of numerical ability test item is a number series. Number series include presenting a set of linked numbers with a number missing from the set. The test taker must then reason from the numbers in the series to find the missing or next number in the series. Some examples are below.

1	20, 16, 12, 8, ?	Subtract 4 successively
2	5, 8, ?, 17, 23, 30	The number being added each time is increasing by (i.e., $5 + 3$, $8 + 4$ and so on)
3	2.2, 4.1, 6.0, 7.9	Adding 1.9 each time
4	4000, 2000, 1000, 500, 250...?	Divided by 2 each time

Number analogies

With number analogy questions, you are given a pair of numbers that follow a specific mathematical relationship and need to apply that same relationship to another number to find its corresponding pair.

Examples:

1. 4 is to 8 as 3 is to....?

Answer: 8 ($4 \times 2 = 8$ and $3 \times 2 = 6$)

2. $\frac{3}{4}$ is to .75 as 0.5 is to.....?

Answer: $\frac{1}{2}$ ($\frac{3}{4}$ is the fraction form of 0.75 and .05 is the decimal form of $\frac{1}{2}$)

3. 5 is to 25 as 6 is to?

Answer: 36 ($5 \times 5 = 25$ and $6 \times 6 = 36$)

Odd-one-out

With odd one out questions, the idea is to find the number that does not fit. Typical aspects to look for include:

Odd or evens	Answer
14, 34, 5, 6, 18	5 - the rest are even numbers
Common multiples	Answer
3, 7, 21, 24, 15, 9, 27	7 - the rest are multiples of three
Items that are the same	Answer
0.25, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{4}{16}$, 25%	$\frac{1}{2}$ all others are equal

With most odd-one-out questions, you can generally think of a reason why one response is different from the others. For example, in the last question 0.25 is the only item that involves a decimal point, $\frac{1}{4}$ is the only item with a 4 on the bottom, $\frac{4}{16}$ is the only item that can be simplified, 25% is the only item that involves a percentage. However, in the example the answer is a $\frac{1}{2}$ as all other options represent a quarter.

Word based questions

In some numerical assessments, one or more questions might be presented in word format rather than numbers. To answer these questions you might find it helpful to rewrite the words into numbers as you read the question. Some examples are below.

1. If you have five pears, twelve oranges, eight apples, and a pineapple, how many pieces of fruit do you have?
Alternatively the question could be written $5 + 12 + 8 + 1 = ?$
2. If you go to the store with \$5 and buy a carton of milk for \$1.40, a candy bar for \$1.10, and a newspaper costing \$.80 how much change would you get?
Alternatively, this could be written $5.00 - 1.4 - 1.1 - 0.8 = ?$

Simple algebra

Depending on the assessment you are completing, you might also need to complete a few numerical questions that require more than simple adding, subtracting, multiplication, and division. These typically involve simple algebra. An example is below:

1. Maria buys 5 pencils and 2 erasers for a total cost of \$14. Each pencil costs \$2. How much does each eraser cost?

Answer: Each pencil costs \$2, and Maria bought 5 pencils, so: $5 \times 2 = \$10$

Subtract then the cost of the pencils from the total left over for the erasers, so: $\$14 - \10 for pencils.

This means Maria spent \$4 on two erasers, so: $\$4 / 2 = \2 is the cost of each eraser.

2. If a train travels 2800 km in 14 days, how far will it travel in 3 days if it travels at the same speed?

Answer: Find out how far the train travels in one day by dividing the total distance travelled by the total days travelled, so: $2800 / 14 = 200$ km.

Now multiple 200km by 3 days to work out distance travelled in 3 days = 600km.

3. Lisa drives 120 miles from her home to visit a friend. On the way back, she takes a different route that is 20 miles longer. If Lisa's total driving time for the round trip is 5 hours, and she drives at the same speed both ways, what is her driving speed in miles per hour?

Answer: This question has two parts:

- a. Find the total distance Lisa drove:

- On the way to her friend, Lisa drives 120 miles. On the way back, she drives 20 miles more, so the return trip is: $120+20=140$ miles.
- The total distance Lisa drove is: $120+140=260$ miles.

- b. Calculate the speed:

- Lisa's total distance travelled is 260 miles, and her total driving time is 5 hours. So to work out her speed we need to divide the total distance travelled (260) by the hours taken (5) = 52 miles per hour.

ABSTRACT REASONING

Abstract reasoning assessments can also be referred to as diagrammatic reasoning or inductive reasoning by some test producers.

Employers use abstract reasoning tests to assess a candidate's capacity for learning new concepts, pattern recognition, and logical thinking using abstract shapes, symbols, and diagrams. It involves thinking beyond the concrete and literal to understand complex concepts and relationships that aren't immediately obvious.

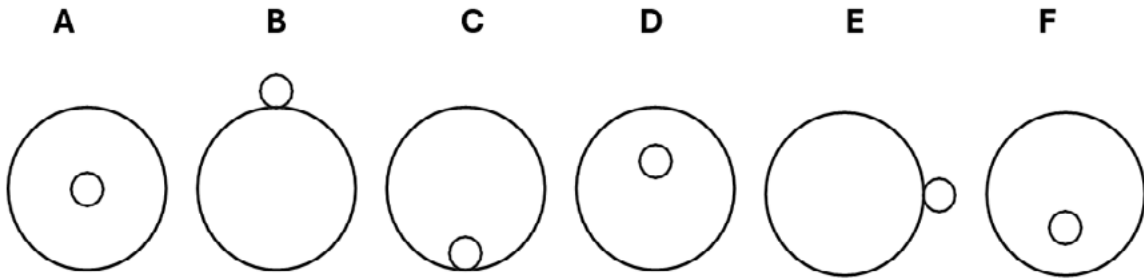
The abstract reasoning test is non-verbal and non-numerical, meaning that all you will be presented with is shapes and patterns. You are then required to identify the relationship between each image or determine what it is that connects the images.

In the workplace, strong abstract reasoning skills are essential because they enable you to adapt to new situations, solve unfamiliar problems, and grasp ideas quickly. This kind of thinking is crucial for roles that require the ability to learn and apply new information effectively.

General tips for approaching abstract reasoning questions

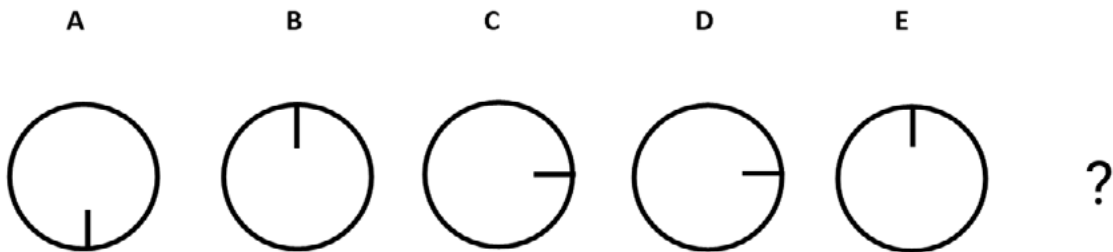
- **Identify patterns and relationships:** Start by carefully examining the shapes, symbols, or sequences presented. Look for patterns such as repetition, rotation, reflection, progression, or alternation.
- **Break down complex images:** If the figures are intricate, break them down into their basic components. Analyse individual elements like lines, angles, shapes, and how they interact with each other.
- **Consider all attributes:** Pay attention to various attributes such as size, shape, colour, shading, orientation, and position. Sometimes, the pattern is based on a combination of these attributes rather than just one.
- **Look for sequential progressions:** In sequences, determine how each item transforms into the next. This could involve adding or subtracting elements, changing positions, or altering shapes in a consistent manner.
- **Use the process of elimination:** If you're unsure of the correct answer, eliminate options that clearly don't fit the identified pattern. Narrowing down the choices increases your chances of selecting the right answer.

What is the odd one out?



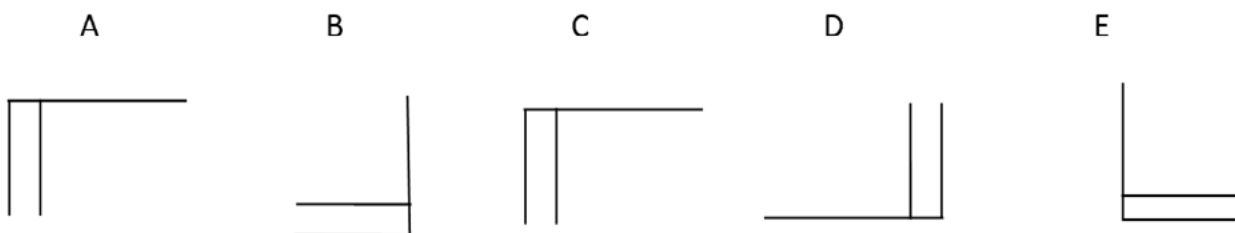
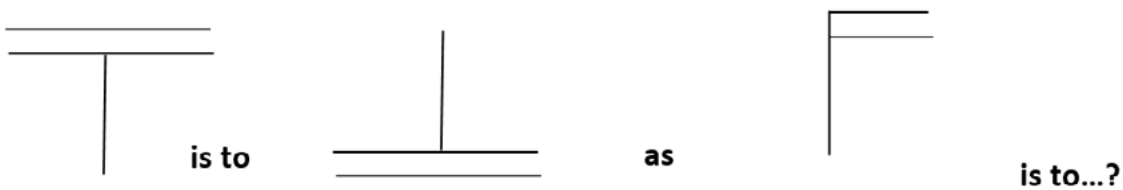
Answer: In this question 'A' is the odd one out because it is the only image in which the small circle appears precisely in the middle.

What comes next?



Answer: In this question, the correct answer is 'A' as the sequence is reversing from 'C'. So, A-B-C is the sequence, and D-B-A is the reverse of this.

Analogies



Answer: In this question you need to use the relationship between the first two images to work out the missing image. Because the first image is turned upside down, the correct answer is 'B' as this is the topline image when turned upside down.



CANDIDATE PREPARATION

Completing a general ability test



AUSTRALIA | CHINA | CROATIA | CZECH REPUBLIC | EGYPT | FINLAND
GERMANY | INDIA | ITALY | NEW ZEALAND | OMAN | REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
SINGAPORE | SOUTH AFRICA | SWEDEN | SWITZERLAND | THE NETHERLANDS
TURKEY | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | UNITED KINGDOM