Liability Report

Personnel Assessment Tools

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Abstract

Employers can effectively use personnel assessment instruments to measure job-relevant skills and capabilities of applicants and employees. These tools can help to identify and select better workers and can help improve the quality of an organization's overall performance. To use these tools properly, employers must be aware of the inherent limitations of any assessment procedure, as well as the legal issues involved in assessment.

Introduction

Personnel assessment is a systematic approach to gathering information about individuals. This information is used to make employment or career-related decisions about applicants and employees. Assessment is conducted for some specific purpose. For example, an employer may conduct personnel assessment to select employees for a job. Career counselors may conduct personnel assessment to provide career guidance to clients.

Any test or procedure used to measure an individual's employment or career-related qualifications and interests can be considered a personnel assessment tool. There are many types of personnel assessment tools. These include traditional knowledge and ability tests, inventories, and subjective procedures. In this report, the term "test" will be used as a generic term to refer to any procedure that samples behavior or performance.

Personnel assessment tools differ in:

- Purpose (e.g., selection, placement, promotion, career counseling, or training)

- What they are designed to measure (e.g., abilities, skills, work styles, work values, or vocational interests)

- What they are designed to predict (e.g., job performance, managerial potential, career success, job satisfaction, or tenure)

- Format (e.g., paper-and-pencil, work-sample, or computer simulation)

- Level of standardization, objectivity, and quantifiability (e.g., there are subjective evaluations of resumes, highly structured achievement tests, interviews having varying degrees of structure, and personality inventories with no specific right or wrong answers)

All assessment tools used to make employment decisions, regardless of their format, level of standardization, or objectivity, are subject to professional and legal standards. For example, both the evaluation of a resume and the use of a highly standardized achievement test must comply with applicable laws. Assessment tools used solely for career exploration or counseling are usually not held to the same legal standards.

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A personnel test or a procedure provides only part of the picture about a person. On the other hand, the personnel assessment process combines and evaluates all the information gathered about a person to make career or employment-related decisions.

This report provides basic information on assessment tools that can be used by employers, and advantages and disadvantages to their usage. Readers desiring more specific information on evaluating, selecting, and administering assessment tools/procedures, and interpreting assessment results, and on understanding the professional and legal standards to be followed when conducting personnel assessments are referred to *Testing and Assessment: An Employer's Guide to Good Practices*, published by the U.S. Department of Labor.

What do Tests Measure?

Employees and applicants vary widely in their knowledge, skills, abilities, interests, work styles, and other characteristics. These differences systematically affect the way people perform or behave on the job.

These differences in characteristics are not necessarily apparent by simply observing the employee or job applicant. Employment tests can be used to gather accurate information about job-relevant characteristics. This information helps assess the fit or match between people and jobs. To give an example, an applicant's score on a mechanical test reflects his or her mechanical ability as measured by the test. This score can be used to predict how well that applicant is likely to perform in a job that requires mechanical ability, as demonstrated through a professionally conducted job analysis. Tests can be used in this way to identify potentially good workers.

Some tests can be used to predict employee and applicant job performance. In testing terms, whatever the test is designed to predict is called the criterion. A criterion can be any measure of work behavior or any outcome that can be used as the standard for successful job performance. Some commonly used criteria are productivity, supervisory ratings of job performance, success in training, tenure, and absenteeism. For example, in measuring job performance, supervisory ratings could be the criterion predicted by a test of mechanical ability. How well a test predicts a criterion is one indication of the usefulness of the test.

Why Employers Conduct Tests?

Employers use assessment tools and procedures to help them perform the following human resource functions:

- Selection. Organizations want to be able to identify and hire the best people for the job and the organization in a fair and efficient manner. A properly developed assessment tool may provide a way to select successful sales people, concerned customer service representatives, and effective workers in many other occupations.

- Placement. Organizations also want to be able to assign people to the appropriate job level. For example, an organization may have several managerial positions, each having a different level of responsibility. Assessment may provide information that helps organizations achieve the best fit between employees and jobs.

- Training and development. Tests are used to find out whether employees have mastered training materials. They can help identify those applicants and employees who might benefit from either remedial or advanced training. Information gained from testing can be used to design or modify training programs. Test results also help individuals identify areas in which self-development activities would be useful.

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- Promotion. Organizations may use tests to identify employees who possess managerial potential or higher level capabilities, so that these employees can be promoted to assume greater duties and responsibilities.

- Career exploration and guidance. Tests are sometimes used to help people make educational and vocational choices. Tests may provide information that helps individuals choose occupations in which they are likely to be successful and satisfied.

- Program evaluation. Tests may provide information that the organization can use to determine whether employees are benefiting from training and development programs.

Some situations in which an organization may benefit from testing include the following:

- Current selection or placement procedures result in poor hiring decisions.

- Employee productivity is low.

- Employee errors have serious financial, health, or safety consequences.

- There is high employee turnover or absenteeism.

Employment Laws and Regulations with Implications for Assessment

The general purpose of employment laws and regulations is to prohibit unfair discrimination in employment and provide equal employment opportunity for all. Unfair discrimination occurs when employment decisions are based on race, sex, religion, ethnicity, age, or disability rather than on job-relevant knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics. Employment practices that unfairly discriminate against people are called unlawful or discriminatory employment practices.

The number of laws and regulations governing the employment process has increased over the past four decades. Laws and regulations, which have important implications for conducting employment assessment, include:

1. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (CRA) of 1964, as amended in 1972; Tower Amendment to Title VII

2. Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA)

3. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) - 1972

4. *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures – 1978* (Uniform Guidelines); adverse or disparate impact, approaches to determine existence of adverse impact, four-fifths rule, job-relatedness, business necessity, biased assessment procedures

5. Title I of the Civil Rights Act (CRA) of 1991

6. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - 1990

7. Record keeping of adverse impact and job-relatedness of tests (the Uniform Guidelines and subsequent regulations require that all employers maintain a record of their employment-related activities, including statistics related to testing and adverse impact. Filing and record-keeping requirements for large employers (those with over 100 employees) are generally more extensive than those for employers with 100 or fewer employees. To learn more about the specific requirements, refer to EEOC regulations on

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record-keeping and reporting requirements under Title VII, and the ADA, 29 CFR part 1602, and the Uniform Guidelines).

8. The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing - 1985; The Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures - 1987

9. Relationship between federal, state, and local employment laws (some States and localities have issued their own fair employment practices laws, and some have adopted the federal Uniform Guidelines. These state and local laws may be more stringent than corresponding federal laws. When there is a contradiction, federal laws and regulations override any contradictory provisions of corresponding State or local laws).

Reliability and Validity

Test reliability and validity are two technical properties of a test that indicate the quality and usefulness of the test. These are the two most important features of a test.

Reliability refers to how dependably or consistently a test measures a characteristic. If a person takes the test again, will he or she get a similar test score, or a much different score? A test that yields similar scores for a person who repeats the test is said to measure a characteristic reliably.

Validity refers to what characteristic the test measures and how well the test measures that characteristic. Validity tells if the characteristic being measured by a test is related to job qualifications and requirements - it gives meaning to the test scores. Validity evidence indicates that there is linkage between test performance and job performance.

Validity also tells you what you may conclude or predict about someone from his or her score on the test. If a test has been demonstrated to be a valid predictor of performance on a specific job, you can conclude that persons scoring high on the test are more likely to perform well on the job than persons who score low on the test, all else being equal. Validity also describes the degree to which you can make specific conclusions or predictions about people based on their test scores. In other words, it indicates the usefulness of the test.

It is important to understand the differences between reliability and validity. Validity indicates how good a test is for a particular situation; reliability indicates how trustworthy a score on that test will be. Valid conclusions cannot be drawn from a test score unless the test is reliable. Even when a test is reliable, it may not be valid. Any test selected should be both reliable and valid for the particular situation.

Types of Testing

Testing that can be used by employers to assess applicants and employees include mental and physical ability tests, achievement tests, personality inventories, honesty and integrity measures, medical examinations, and drug and alcohol tests.

Mental and Physical Ability Tests

When properly applied, ability tests are among the most useful and valid tools available for predicting success in jobs and training across a wide variety of occupations. Ability tests are most commonly used for entry-level jobs, and for applicants without professional training or advanced degrees. Mental ability tests are generally used to measure the ability to learn and perform particular job responsibilities.

Examples of some mental abilities are verbal, quantitative, and spatial abilities. Physical ability tests usually encompass abilities, such as strength, endurance, and flexibility.

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- General ability tests typically measure one or more broad mental abilities, such as verbal, mathematical, and reasoning skills. These skills are fundamental to success in many different kinds of jobs, especially where cognitive activities, such as reading, computing, analyzing, or communicating, are involved.

- Specific ability tests include measures of distinct physical and mental abilities, such as reaction time, written comprehension, mathematical reasoning, and mechanical ability, which are important for many jobs and occupations. For example, good mechanical ability may be important for success in auto mechanic and engineering jobs; physical endurance may be critical for firefighting jobs.

Although mental ability tests are valid predictors of performance in many jobs, use of such tests to make employment decisions often results in adverse impact[1]. For example, research suggests that mental abilities tests adversely impact some racial minority groups and, if speed is also a component of the test, older workers may be adversely impacted. Similarly, use of physical ability tests often results in adverse impact against women and older persons.

Achievement Tests

Achievement tests, also known as proficiency tests, are frequently used to measure an individual's current knowledge or skills that are important to a particular job. These tests generally fall into one of the following formats:

- Knowledge tests typically involve specific questions to determine how much the individual knows about particular job tasks and responsibilities. Traditionally they have been administered in a paper-and-pencil format, but computer administration is becoming more common. Licensing exams for accountants and psychologists are examples of knowledge tests. Knowledge tests tend to have relatively high validity.

- Work-sample or performance tests require the individual to actually demonstrate or perform one or more job tasks. These tests, by their makeup, generally show a high degree of job-relatedness. For example, an applicant for an office-machine repairman position may be asked to diagnose the problem with a malfunctioning machine. Test takers generally view these tests as fairer than other types of tests. Use of these tests often results in less adverse impact than mental ability tests and job knowledge tests. However, they can be expensive to develop and administer.

Biodata Inventories

Biodata inventories are standardized questionnaires that gather job-relevant biographical information, such as amount and type of schooling, job experiences, and hobbies. They are generally used to predict job and training performance, tenure, and turnover. They capitalize on the well-proven notion that past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior.

Some individuals might provide inaccurate information on biodata inventories to portray themselves as being more qualified or experienced than they really are. Internal consistency checks can be used to detect whether there are discrepancies in the information reported. In addition, reference checks and resumes can be used to verify information.

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[1] One of the basic principles of the Uniform Guidelines is that it is unlawful to use a test or selection procedure that creates adverse impact, unless justified. Adverse impact occurs when there is a substantially different rate of selection in hiring, promotion, or other employment decisions that work to the disadvantage of members of a race, sex, or ethnic group.

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Employment Interviews

The employment interview is probably the most commonly used assessment tool. The interview can range from being totally unplanned (i.e., unstructured), to carefully designed beforehand (i.e., completely structured). The most structured interviews have characteristics, such as standardized questions, trained interviewers, specific question order, controlled length of time, and a standardized response evaluation format. At the other end of the spectrum, a completely unstructured interview would probably be done "off the cuff," with untrained interviewers, random questions, and with no consideration of time. A structured interview that is based on an analysis of the job in question is generally a more valid predictor of job performance than an unstructured interview. Keep in mind that interviews may contain both structured and unstructured characteristics.

Regardless of the extent to which the interview is structured or unstructured, the skill of the interviewer can make a difference in the quality of the information gathered. A skillful, trained interviewer will be able to ask job-relevant follow-up questions to clarify and explore issues brought up during the interview.

It is unlawful to ask questions about medical conditions and disability before a conditional job offer. Even if the job applicant volunteers such information, the interviewer is not permitted to pursue inquiries about the nature of the medical condition or disability. Instead, the interviewer should refocus so that emphasis is on the ability of the applicant to perform the job. In some limited circumstances, the interviewer may ask about the need for reasonable accommodation.

Where disability is concerned, the law requires that employers provide reasonable accommodations (meaning a modification or adjustment) to a job, the work environment or the way things are usually done so that qualified individuals with a disability are not excluded from jobs that they can perform.

These legal requirements apply to all selection standards and procedures, including questions and rating systems used during the interview process.

Personality Inventories

In addition to abilities, knowledge, and skills, job success also depends on an individual's personal characteristics. Personality inventories designed for use in employment contexts are used to evaluate such characteristics as motivation, conscientiousness, self-confidence, or how well an employee might get along with fellow workers. Research has shown that, in certain situations, use of personality tests with other assessment instruments can yield helpful predictions.

Some personality inventories have been developed to determine the psychological attributes of an individual for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. These clinical tools are not specifically designed to measure job-related personality dimensions. These tests are used in only very limited employment situations, primarily with jobs where it is critical to have some idea about an applicant's state of mind, such as in the selection of law enforcement officers or nuclear power plant workers. This distinction between clinical and employment-oriented personality inventories can be confusing. Applicants asked to take personality tests may become concerned even though only employment-oriented personality inventories will be administered.

If a personality inventory or other assessment tool provides information that would lead to identifying a mental disorder or impairment, the tool is considered a medical exam under the ADA. The ADA permits medical examinations of applicants and employees only in limited circumstances. There are a few additional concerns about personality tests. Since there are usually no right or wrong answers to the test items, test takers may provide socially desirable answers. However, sophisticated personality inventories often have "lie-scales" built in, which allow such response patterns to be detected. There is also a general perception that these tests ask personal questions that are only indirectly relevant to job performance. This may raise concern on the part of test takers that such tests are an invasion of privacy. Some of these concerns can be reduced by including personality tests only as one part of a broader assessment program.

Honesty and Integrity Measures

Honesty tests are a specific type of personality test. There has been an increase in the popularity of honesty and integrity measures since the Employee Polygraph Protection Act (1988) prohibited the use of polygraph tests by most private employers. Honesty and integrity measures may be broadly categorized into two types.

- Overt integrity tests gauge involvement in and attitudes toward theft and employee delinquency. Test items typically ask for opinions about frequency and extent of employee theft, leniency or severity of attitudes toward theft, and rationalizations of theft. They also include direct questions about admissions of, or dismissal for, theft or other unlawful activities.

- Personality-based measures typically contain disguised-purpose questions to gauge a number of personality traits. These traits are usually associated with a broad range of counterproductive employee behaviors, such as insubordination, excessive absenteeism, disciplinary problems, and substance abuse.

All the legitimate concerns and cautions of personality testing apply here. For instance, test takers may raise privacy concerns or question the relevance of these measures to job performance. If an employer chooses to use an honesty test to select people for a particular job, the business necessity of such a test should be documented. This would require a detailed job analysis, including an assessment of the consequences of hiring a dishonest individual. The employer should make certain that staff have the proper training and qualifications to administer and interpret integrity tests.

It is generally recommended that these tests be used only for preemployment screening. Using the test with present employees could create serious morale problems. Using current employees' poor scores to make employment decisions may have legal repercussions when not substantiated by actual counterproductive behavior.

All honesty and integrity measures have appreciable prediction errors. To minimize prediction errors, thoroughly follow up on poor-scoring individuals with retesting, interviews, or reference checks. In general, integrity measures should not be used as the sole source of information for making employment decisions about individuals.

A number of states currently have statutes restricting the use of honesty and integrity measures. At least one state has an outright ban on their use. State regulations that govern the use of honesty and integrity tests should be consulted before using them.

Education and Experience, Including Licensing and Certification, Requirements

Most jobs have some kind of education and experience requirements. For example, they may specify that only applicants with college degrees or equivalent training or experience will be considered. Such requirements are more common in technical, professional, and higher-level jobs. Certain licensing, certification, and education requirements are mandated by law, as in the case of truck drivers and physicians. This is done to verify minimum competence and to protect public safety.

Requirements for experience and education should be job-related. If the requirements result in adverse impact, the employer will have to demonstrate that they are job-related and justified by business necessity. However, in some cases job-relatedness might be difficult to demonstrate. For example, it is difficult to show that exactly 3 years of experience is necessary or demonstrate that a high school degree is required for a particular job.

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Recommendations and Reference Checks

Recommendations and reference checks are often used to verify education, employment, and achievement records already provided by the applicant in some other form, such as during an interview or on a resume or application form. This is primarily done for professional and high-level jobs.

These verification procedures generally do not help separate potentially good workers from poor workers. This is because they almost always result in positive reports. However, use of these measures may serve two important purposes: they provide an incentive to applicants to be more honest with the information they provide and help safeguard against potential negligent hiring lawsuits.

Assessment Centers

In the assessment-center approach, candidates are generally assessed with a wide variety of instruments and procedures. These could include interviews, ability and personality measures, and a range of standardized management activities and problem-solving exercises. Typical of these activities and exercises are in-basket tests, leaderless group discussions, and role-play exercises. Assessment centers are most widely used for managerial and high level positions to assess managerial potential, promotability, problem-solving skills, and decision-making skills.

- In-basket tests ask the candidates to sort through a manager's "in-basket" of letters, memos, directives, and reports describing problems and scenarios. Candidates are asked to examine them, prioritize them, and respond appropriately with memos, action plans, and problem-solving strategies. Trained assessors then evaluate the candidates' responses.

- Leaderless group discussions are group exercises in which a group of candidates are asked to respond to various kinds of problems and scenarios, without a designated group leader. Candidates are evaluated on their behavior in the group discussions. This might include their teamwork skills, their interaction with others, or their leadership skills.

- In role-play exercises, candidates are asked to pretend that they already have the job and must interact with another employee to solve a problem. The other employee is usually a trained assessor. The exercise may involve providing a solution to a problem that the employee presents, or suggesting some course of action regarding a hypothetical situation. Candidates are evaluated on the behavior displayed, solutions provided, or advice given.

Assessors must be appropriately trained. Their skills and experience are essential to the quality of the evaluations they provide. Assessment centers apply the whole-person approach to personnel assessment. They can be very good predictors of job performance and behavior when the tests and procedures making up the assessment center are constructed and used appropriately.

It can be costly to set up an assessment center. Large companies may have their own assessment centers; mid-size and smaller firms sometimes send candidates to private consulting firms for evaluation.

Medical Examinations

Medical examinations are used to determine if a person can safely and adequately perform a specific job. Medical exams may also be part of a procedure for maintaining comprehensive employee health and safety plans. In some limited circumstances, medical exams may be used for evaluating employee requests for reasonable accommodation for disabilities.

The ADA outlines when and in what manner medical exams can be used in employment-related situations. For additional information on the ADA, see the EEOC's *Technical Assistance Manual on the Employment Provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA Enforcement Guidance: Preemployment Disability –*

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Related Questions and Medical Examinations, and *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*. Some major points regarding medical exams are described below.

- Administering medical exams to job applicants or asking questions related to disability prior to making a job offer is prohibited.

- Once a job offer is made to an applicant, a medical exam may be required, as long as the exam is required of all persons entering the same job category. A medical exam may be required even if it bears no relevance to job performance. However, if a job applicant is refused hire based on the results of the medical exam, the reasons for rejecting the applicant must be founded on issues of job-relevance and business necessity. In addition, the employer must demonstrate that no reasonable accommodation was available or possible without imposing undue hardship on the business.

- A medical exam may disqualify an individual who is deemed to be a direct threat to the health and safety of self or others. The EEOC has provided an explanation of what constitutes a direct threat. When an individual is rejected as a direct threat to health and safety,

  1. the employer must be prepared to show a significant current risk of substantial harm (not a speculative or remote risk);

  2. the specific risk must be identified;

  3. consideration of the risk must be based on objective medical or other factual evidence regarding the particular individual; and

  4. even if a genuine significant risk of substantial harm exists, the employer must consider whether it can be eliminated or reduced below the level of a direct threat by reasonable accommodation.

- Stricter rules apply for medical exams or inquiries of current employees. Unlike the rules for applicants, these exams or inquiries must be justified based on job relevance and business necessity. The need for a medical exam may arise as a result of some problems with job performance or safety caused by a medical condition or it may be mandated by federal law for certain job categories. For example, Occupational Safety and Health Act - OSHA mandates medical monitoring of employees with exposure to specific occupational health hazards, e.g., exposure to toxic chemicals, carcinogens, or workplace sound levels exceeding 85 decibels on average.

- An organization may conduct voluntary medical exams and inquiries of employees as part of an employee health program. However, the ADA imposes limitations on the use of this information. Medical records of all applicants and employees must be kept separate from all other personnel information.

- If medical information is used to make personnel decisions, the employer should develop a written policy on medical testing to ensure compliance with relevant federal, State, and local laws.

Drug and Alcohol Tests

An employer may prohibit the use of alcohol and illegal drugs at the workplace and may require that employees not be under the influence of either while on the job. Some commonly reported negative work behaviors and outcomes associated with alcohol and drug abuse are industrial accidents, work-related injuries, excessive absenteeism or tardiness, and workplace violence.

Current use, possession, or distribution of illicit drugs does not qualify as a "disability" under the ADA. Employers may prohibit the use of such drugs at the workplace, and may administer drug tests to applicants and employees alike. Employers may deny employment to an applicant and discipline or discharge an employee currently engaged in illegal drug use; however, they may not discriminate against a former drug addict who has successfully undergone rehabilitation and does not currently use illicit drugs.

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If the organization is in the public sector, federal courts have generally upheld the use of random drug tests only when applied to safety-sensitive positions. This federal restriction does not apply to private employers. However, State or local laws and collective bargaining agreements pertaining to drug testing may impose restrictions on a company's drug testing policy.

Some legal medications or even some foods can produce a positive reading on a drug screening test for an individual who, in fact, has not used illegal drugs. To minimize such errors, it is advisable to have a formal appeals process, and also provisions for retesting with a more sensitive drug test when necessary.

Under the ADA, a test for the illegal use of drugs is not considered a medical exam, but a test for alcohol use is. Therefore, employers must follow the ADA rules on medical exams in deciding whether and when to administer an alcohol test to applicants or employees.

Alcoholism may qualify as a disability under the ADA, and hence an individual with this condition may be extended protection. However, organizations may discipline individuals who violate conduct or performance standards that are related to the job. Organizations also may discharge individuals whose use of alcohol impairs job performance or compromises safety to the extent that they can no longer be considered a "qualified individual with a disability."

If an organization uses drug or alcohol tests to make personnel decisions, a written policy governing such a program to ensure compliance with all relevant federal, State, and local laws should be developed. Most States require written consent of employees and applicants before drug or alcohol tests can be administered. Employers should consult the ADA, the EEOC's *Technical Assistance Manual on the Employment Provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act*, the EEOC's *ADA Enforcement Guidance: Preemployment Disability - Related Questions and Medical Examinations*, and the EEOC's *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*, as well as State and local laws, when developing a drug or alcohol testing program.

Summary

Table 1 contains a brief description of the advantages and disadvantages of different types of assessment instruments.

Type of assessment instrument	Advantages	Disadvantages
Ability tests	Mental ability tests • Are among the most useful predictors of performance across a wide variety of jobs • Are usually easy and inexpensive to administer	• Use of ability tests can result in high levels of adverse impact • Physical ability tests can be costly to develop and administer
Achievement/proficiency tests	• In general, job knowledge and work-sample tests have relatively high validity • Job knowledge tests are generally easy and inexpensive to administer • Work-sample tests usually result	• Written job knowledge tests can result in adverse impact • Work-sample tests can be expensive to develop and administer

	in less adverse impact than ability tests and written knowledge tests	
Biodata inventories	• Easy and inexpensive to administer • Some validity evidence exists • May help to reduce adverse impact when used in conjunction with other tests and procedures	• Privacy concerns may be an issue with some questions • Faking is a concern (information should be verified when possible)
Employment interviews	• Structured interviews, based on job analyses, tend to be valid • May reduce adverse impact if used in conjunction with other tests	• Unstructured interviews typically have poor validity • Skill of the interviewer is critical to the quality of interview (interviewer training can help)
Personality inventories	• Usually do not result in adverse impact • Predictive validity evidence exists for some personality inventories in specific situations • May help to reduce adverse impact when used in conjunction with other tests and procedures • Easy and inexpensive to administer	• Need to distinguish between clinical and employment-oriented personality inventories in terms of their purpose and use • Possibility of faking or providing socially desirable answers • Concern about invasion of privacy (use only as part of a broader assessment battery)
Honesty/integrity measures	• Usually do not result in adverse impact • Have been shown to be valid in some cases • Easy and inexpensive to administer	• Strong concerns about invasion of privacy (use only as part of a broader assessment battery) • Possibility of faking or providing socially desirable answers • Test users may require special qualifications for administration and interpretation of test scores • Should not be used with current employees • Some states restrict use of honesty and integrity tests
Education and experience requirements	• Can be useful for certain technical, professional, and higher level jobs to guard against gross mismatch or incompetence	• In some cases, it is difficult to demonstrate job relatedness and business necessity of education and experience requirements

Recommendations and reference checks	• Can be used to verify information previously provided by applicants • Can serve as protection against potential negligent hiring lawsuits • May encourage applicants to provide more accurate information	• Reports are almost always positive; they do not typically help differentiate between good workers and poor workers
Assessment centers	• Good predictors of job and training performance, managerial potential, and leadership ability • Apply the whole-person approach to personnel assessment	• Can be expensive to develop and administer • Specialized training required for assessors; their skill is essential to the quality of assessment centers
Medical examinations	• Can help ensure a safe work environment when use is consistent with relevant federal, State, and local laws	• Cannot be administered prior to making a job offer. Restrictions apply to administering to applicants postoffer or to current employees. • There is a risk of violating applicable regulations (a written policy, consistent with all relevant laws, should be established to govern the entire medical testing program)
Drug and alcohol tests	• Can help ensure a safe and favorable work environment when program is consistent with relevant federal, State, and local laws	• An alcohol test is considered a medical exam and applicable law restricting medical examination in employment must be followed. • There is a risk of violating applicable regulations (a written policy, consistent with all relevant laws, should be established to govern the entire drug or alcohol testing program)

References

1. Employment and Training Administration. *Testing and Assessment: An Employer's Guide to Good Practices.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 1999.
    <http://www.uniformguidelines.com/testassess.pdf>