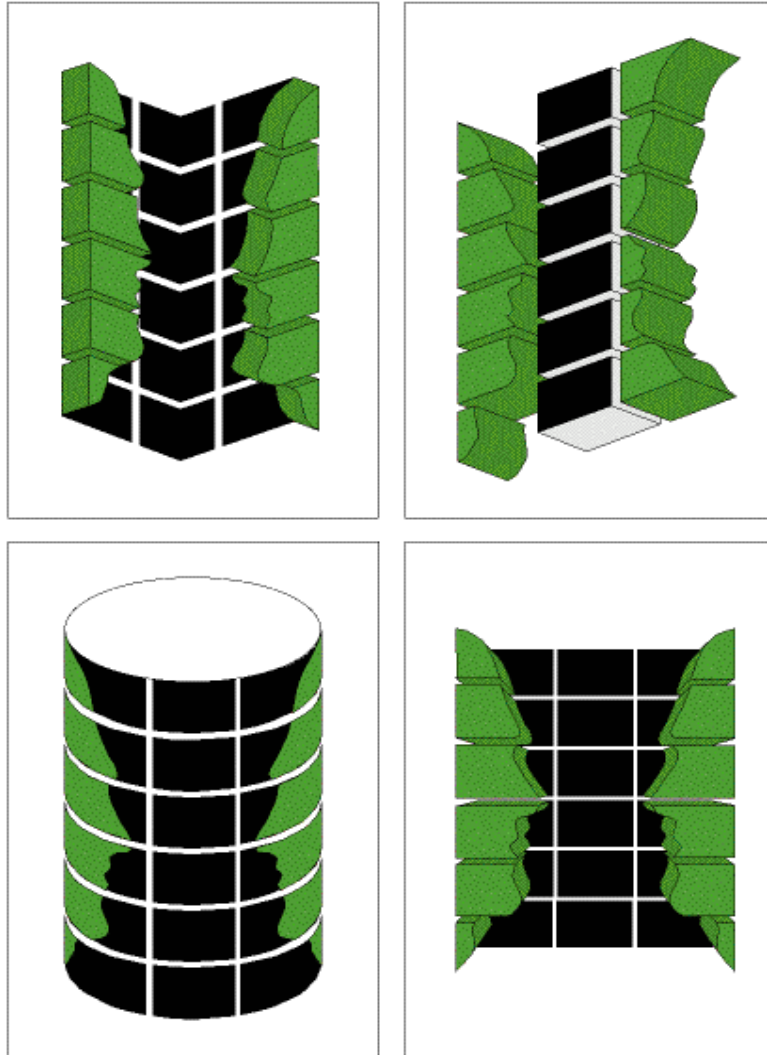


Advanced Problem Solving Tests

Guidance Notes for Candidates

Series 2



KCP

Knight Chapman Psychological

Testing and Selection

It is now very common for employers to use aptitude tests, personality questionnaires and work simulation exercises as one part of their selection or development processes.

Tests are certainly not the be-all and end-all, but they can provide information about people which it is extremely difficult to assess by traditional methods such as the interview. The information is also gathered and evaluated in a more objective way, making tests, questionnaires and assessment centre exercises fairer.

You should remember, however, that these techniques form only ONE part of what you have to do when applying for a job or a promotion.

What is the APST?

The APST is a series of high level problem solving tests developed by Knight Chapman Psychological Ltd, a specialist consultancy of Chartered Occupational Psychologists. The Test Battery has been especially designed for use in the selection and development of managers and graduates. The tests are only supplied to companies who have professional staff who have been trained to the British Psychological Society's Certificate of Competence in Occupational Testing.

There are a number of different tests in the APST (although please note that you may not be required to take all of them).

- A Verbal Critical Reasoning Test
- A Numerical Critical Reasoning Test
- A Creative Problem Solving Test

What do the tests measure?

The Verbal Critical Reasoning Test measures your ability to identify logic (or the lack of it) in written information. You do not have to write anything yourself - you will be presented with the information and you will have options to choose from. This ability to recognise logical arguments has been shown to be important in most managerial and professional roles.

The Numerical Critical Reasoning Test is a measure of your ability to manipulate and integrate work related data from a number of sources. The data are presented in the form of tables, graphs and financial reports. It is not a test of your mathematical capability, although you will need to make calculations and be familiar with percentages and ratios. Numerical Critical Reasoning is important in many jobs where decisions have to be made.

The Creative Problem Solving Test gives you an opportunity to use your imagination. You will be presented with a number of scenarios or problems, and you will be asked to think of creative and wide ranging reasons for the given events. Creativity in problem solving is highly prized in most managerial jobs.

What do the tests look like?

Each test is based on a common set of written information. In this case, it describes a fictional charity (but it could just as easily be some other organisation) and a developing country. You are not expected to have any prior experience of this type of organisation or charitable work generally. Even if you have, it will **not** give you an advantage over other candidates.

You will be given time to become familiar with this information, and you will be able to refer to it throughout the tests.

Each test is presented in a booklet. Before you start each test you will be given full instructions on what you have to do. In the case of the Verbal and Numerical Reasoning Tests you will also be given some practice questions. There are no marks for these, but they help you to understand and clarify what is expected of you.

Each of the activities is strictly timed:-

- Verbal Critical Reasoning Test 20 minutes
- Numerical Critical Reasoning Test 35 minutes
- Creative Problem Solving Test 20 minutes

How to do your best

Your assessors are not trying to trap or trick you. They want you to do well and they will help you as much as possible. Here are some things that you can do to help yourself:-

- Have an early night - you want to feel at your best!
- Plan to arrive early - there's nothing worse than rushing at the last minute.
- Remind yourself that this is only one part of the selection or development procedure. Most people feel a little nervous - this is entirely natural.
- If you wear glasses or need a hearing aid, make sure you take them with you.
- If you have a disability or there are other circumstances which may affect your ability to do the tests or give of your best, tell the assessor **BEFORE** you attend the session.
- Make sure you are comfortable before you start - avoid being hungry, thirsty or needing to use the lavatory.
- You will need a calculator. If you own one, take it with you. If you don't have your own, don't worry, your assessor will lend you one.
- Listen carefully to all the instructions. If you are not sure about anything, please do **ASK**.
- Remember that each test is timed, so work as quickly and accurately as you can.
- Don't get bogged down - if you find a question difficult, forget about it and move on, you can always come back to it later.
- Approach each test and exercise positively. If you didn't enjoy one activity, put it out of your mind and tackle the next task optimistically.
- Read quality authors, journals and newspapers beforehand. Check out the logic in articles with a friend.
- Do some numerical work if you are rusty - you could sort out your personal finances or tackle some figure work you've been putting off.
- Use your powers of imagination - challenge yourself and friends to come up with new explanations for problems.

BEST OF LUCK!

Verbal Critical Reasoning Test Practice

This example is NOT part of the actual test you will undertake, but it is presented in a similar style.
Read the passage of information below, and then answer the practice questions according to these rules:-

Fill in CIRCLE A if the statement is TRUE or follows logically from the information given in the passage.
Fill in CIRCLE B if the statement is FALSE from the information given in the passage.
Fill in CIRCLE C if there is INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION to say for certain whether the statement is either true or false given the information contained within the passage.

In giving your answers, use only the information provided. Assume that it is true even if it contradicts what you believe to be the case in reality.

Please read this passage carefully, and then give your answers below.

Business Profiles - Anglo-European Bank

For 58 years Anglo-European Bank (AEB) was owned by a consortium of the large UK clearing banks, until 4 years ago when it was bought by the German financial services group Deutsche Trust. The latter has been seeking to strengthen its UK/European networks with acquisitions.

AEB's head office is located in Bristol, with most of its 201 branches distributed in the South-West of England. It has been the most profitable bank in the UK for four years. Last year, its pre-tax profits were up 18.5% at £83.5m on total assets of £3bn.

AEB's exceptional performance over recent years cannot be attributed to a single factor. In an interview this year the Bank's Managing Director, Mr Alan Steele said "Our secret is that we are deliberately different from other banks and it is this that gives us a competitive edge."

Firm cost control has played its part in AEB's success, but the Bank has also steered away from some areas of business that have battered its competitors profits, and has dug well into more lucrative areas of business.

The Bank has avoided the two potential mine fields of securities trading and third world lending. It has no stock exchange interests and no sovereign debt on its books. In the corporate sector, the bank has avoided large scale lending on narrow margins. Its lending is primarily with small and medium-sized companies in the South of England and South Wales.

AEB has also enjoyed outstanding success from highly profitable personal lending. Cost control is helped by the absence of an extensive branch network in London and the South East. However, since the take over by Deutsche Trust, AEB has been under pressure to extend its activities into the costly but lucrative South East of England and thereby open the way to the European banking markets.

In the short and medium term AEB will therefore be considering the expansion of its network, and will also be considering other kinds of large scale capital expenditure. Over the past two years the Bank, unlike its UK competitors, has become in the words of Alan Steele "too liquid". Mr Steele has indicated that the Bank will be looking to "increase lending cautiously but extensively" and "implement capital investments that will secure the Bank's success well into the next century".

Financial commentators are not convinced, however, that the Bank's strategy in relation to product positioning, customer service and technological capability match Mr Steele's confidence in the future success of Anglo-European.

This is supported by the view of one senior manager at the Bank, who didn't wish to be named, who told the Express, "Steele certainly has charisma and a passion for moving us forward. Still, I wouldn't want to put money on him carrying all the staff with him. Some people will resist any changes that he puts forward, and that attitude goes right up to the top!"

1. The only factor contributing to AEB's success has been firm financial control. (A) (B) (C)
2. AEB's future plans include large scale corporate lending. (A) (B) (C)
3. Staff resistance is a potential obstacle to Steele's strategic plans. (A) (B) (C)

Numerical Critical Reasoning Test Practice

This example is NOT part of the actual test you will undertake, but it is presented in a similar style. Look at the graphical data below, and then answer the practice questions according to these rules:-

Fill in the Circle that corresponds to the correct answer. Only one answer is correct in each case. Some questions may be impossible to answer from the information given: in these cases INSUFFICIENT DATA is the correct answer.

Please read this information carefully, and then give your answers below.

Fig 1. Number of Branches and Employees Past 5 Years

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Last Year
All UK Retail Banks					
No of branches	35,829	35,336	35,074	34,814	34,535
% change (year on year)	-	-1.38	-0.74	-0.75	-0.80
No of employees (000)	321.7	332.5	348.3	364.8	368.7
% change (year on year)	-	+3.36	+4.75	+4.74	+1.07
AEB					
No of branches	184	191	196	198	201
% change (year on year)	-	+3.80	+2.62	+1.02	+1.52
No of employees (000)	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.8	5.1
% change (year on year)	-	+4.88	+2.33	+9.09	+6.25

Notes: Reductions in numbers of branches across the retail banking sector have resulted from attempts to rationalise operations and therefore improve profitability. Numbers of staff have also been rationalised; however, the overall numbers of staff have increased as a result of expanded services.

1. What was the percentage increase in AEB branches between Year 1 and Last Year?

A
13.92

(A)

B
9.24

(B)

C
8.46

(C)

D
Insufficient data

(D)

2. What will be the average number of employees per branch in all UK banks next year?

A
10.7

(A)

B
25.4

(B)

C
11.4

(C)

D
Insufficient data

(D)