

Crossing the first hurdle

PLACEMENTS It's time for campus recruitment and to prepare for aptitude tests. V Pradeep Kumar shares tips to help you ace the tests

Rajesh, an Engineer and an MBA graduate with distinction from a reputed management institute, was shocked to learn that he had not cleared the aptitude test for recruitment into a top IT company during campus recruitment. With this setback, he almost went into a depression and landed in front of a career consultant. The analysis of the consultant was:

■ Rajesh had answered 56 questions out of 70; 52 were correct and 4 were wrong. With negative marking, Rajesh had scored 48/70; with 69% against 70% cutoff, eliminated in the aptitude test.

■ Rajesh had overspent time on first section of verbal reasoning, missing many questions in the quantitative section. Being an engineer, he could have easily cleared the section and got through the test.

■ The consultant discovered that Rajesh tried answering all questions, which was a wrong strategy.

The case of Rajesh isn't unique and many seemingly good candidates often fail the aptitude tests, which is a process of elimination to bring down the number of candidates.

Recruitment format

A typical recruitment process comprises aptitude tests followed by group discussions and personal interview. An aptitude test, also known as psychometric test, has



quantitative and verbal reasoning questions with multiple answers to choose from, in a limited time.

So, if you are in the last phase of your course and preparing for campus recruitment, following guideline should prove useful:

Know your aptitude:

Aptitude tests differ depending on the job and company profile. Importantly, ensure you have the aptitude for the job, as these tests seek to assess aptitude, numerical and verbal skills, as required to perform the job. For example, if you are an introvert applying for a sales job, your unsuitability will come out in the aptitude test.

Awareness of the job profile:

Research and assess the job profile, the environment in which you will operate and be conscious of the challenges you may have to face. Match the job profile to your skill sets to know your suitability. In case there are weaknesses, work on them.

Preparation for the test:

Understand the format of the aptitude test, various sections, negative marking, etc. Typical sections include verbal reasoning and comprehension, quantitative aptitude, logics and domain knowledge (depending on the job). Practice active reading of newspapers and magazines

to improve verbal comprehension and interpretation. Brush-up your grammar and revise formulas and tables. Remember, practice is the only key for logical and quantitative reasoning.

Mock tests:

Get previous test papers (through books and internet) and take mock tests to understand your strengths and weaknesses, build competence and confidence. About 4 to 5 tests should be adequate in the last month leading up to the test.

The exam:

Mental preparation on the day of the exam is important, as we saw in the case of Rajesh, referred above. Your

attitude should be to clear a maximum number of questions quickly, without wasting time on difficult questions. First, clear comfortable questions in all the sections before answering the difficult ones.

Prioritise sections according to your comfort levels. For example, if your strengths are domain knowledge, quantitative and verbal, follow the same sequence in answering the remaining difficult questions.

Negative marking:

Some tests do have negative marks for wrong answers. As we saw in the case of Rajesh, wrong guesses made his score drop to less than cutoff marks. Therefore, if you are taking chances, eliminate at least two options and make an 'intelligent guess' from the remaining options.

Tips to tackle the test

- Devise a strategy based on your strengths and weaknesses
- Practise mental mathematics.
- Be positive and calm on the day of the test.
- Listen/read instructions carefully.
- Budget your time.
- Quickly scan different sections.
- Begin from sections you are strongest in.
- Be cautious of tricky questions.
- Be honest in answering general aptitude questions.
- Balance speed and accuracy.