

Puzzles, Exercises and Games Tests

How to create and implement neuro-inclusive assessment activities and tests.



About Puzzles, Exercises and Games Tests

Puzzles, Games, and Exercises used as assessment methods that test a candidate's problem-solving abilities, strategic thinking, and relevant skills in an engaging way. These activities can range from logic puzzles and brain teasers to collaborative group exercises and role-playing games.

Benefits

The benefits may include:

- A engaging and enjoyable assessment for candidates, which can reduce anxiety.
- These activities can show how a candidate thinks on their feet, solves problems, and interacts with others in scenarios.
- They allow recruiters to assess a wider range of skills, including flexibility in thinking, creativity, and teamwork.
- Evaluate problem-solving and critical thinking skills, creativity, adaptability and ability to work collaboratively under pressure.
- Works well for roles where teamwork, strategic thinking, and innovation are essential.



Ideal for:

Software developers, marketers, project managers, and designers.

Applicable for:

Technology, marketing, consulting, and creative fields.

Considerations and solutions

There are considerations to address to ensure the assessment is neuro-inclusive. These include:

Considerations

Accessibility concerns:

Not all candidates may be familiar or comfortable with game-based assessments, which could serve as a disadvantage.

Potential bias:

Games may inadvertently favour candidates with specific types of intelligence or problem-solving styles.

Solutions

Provide clear instructions and allow practice time for candidates. Ensure that these assessments are part of a broader set of evaluation tools to maintain fairness.

Use a diverse array of games and exercises to assess various skills and ensure a holistic view of each candidate's abilities.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Puzzles, Exercises, and Games Tests

Example: Technology industry

A tech company hiring for a software developer position might use a hackathon-style exercise where candidates collaborate to solve coding challenges. This allows the company to observe candidates' coding skills, teamwork, and ability to innovate under time constraints.



Puzzles, Exercises, and Games Tests can be effective assessment tools that can evaluate a candidate's problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration skills. To ensure these assessments are neuro-inclusive, careful planning in their design, implementation, and feedback processes is crucial. Inclusive assessments not only create equitable opportunities for neurodivergent candidates but also support a better evaluation of skills.

Designing the assessment

Ensure that the tasks align with job requirements, accommodate varied cognitive styles, and reduce potential stressors.

Key strategies for design:

Clear instructions

Use plain language free of jargon, and provide instructions in multiple formats (written, visual, and verbal). Break tasks into steps to support understanding and reduce anxiety.

Flexibility

Allow candidates to choose where, when and how they complete tasks, whether through written, verbal, or practical demonstrations. This accommodates different cognitive and communication styles, while allowing candidates to conduct the assessment in the conditions that support them to do their best.

Align tasks with the role

Ensure tasks closely mimic real-world job responsibilities. Avoid abstract or overly theoretical challenges that do not reflect the job's actual requirements.

Progressive complexity

Combine multiple-choice, open-ended, and practical tasks to assess a range of skills, maintaining engagement while catering to diverse strengths.

Timing flexibility

Minimise strict timers and allow candidates ample time to complete tasks at their own pace to reduce stress.

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Pre-assessment preparation

Providing detailed, accessible preparation materials helps candidates feel more confident and prepared for the assessment.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Neurodivergent awareness training

Ensure all assessors understand common neurodivergent characteristics and how these may present in the assessment context.

Provide details

Share details about the format, duration, and expectations in advance. Include visual aids, such as task examples or mock exercises. Depending on the location and format, this may include:

- The schedule, including start and end times
 - Access details (location, parking, public transport, signing-in procedures)
 - Venue details, including sensory information and breakout spaces
 - Names, roles, and photographs of interviewer (as relevant)
 - Dress code recommendations
 - Necessary documents to bring
 - Contact details of a support person from the organisation to answer any questions.
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Support familiarisation

Offer candidates the chance to practice similar tasks beforehand to reduce anxiety around unfamiliar formats.

Allow a support person and aids

Communicate to candidates that they can bring a support person, sensory tools, or other aids to support them to do their best.

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Setting up the assessment environment

The assessment environment can significantly affect a candidate's performance, especially for individuals who may have sensory needs.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Workplace visit

Where applicable, offer candidates an opportunity to tour the workplace prior to the assessment. This visit can help candidates familiarise themselves with the setting, reducing anxiety and allowing them to identify accommodations they may need.

Sensory-friendly settings

- Minimise loud, continuous noise
(For example, the humming from coffee machines)
- Avoid sudden loud noises, like doors slamming
- Ensure consistent, non-flickering lighting
- Avoid strong smells from perfumes, kitchens, or nearby restrooms
- Provide simple décor and communicate any potential sensory stimuli in advance
- Provide a range of sensory items that the candidate can use during the assessment
- Provide a range of alternative seating options and encourage them to move furniture around.



Ask the candidate:
"How can we make the assessment more comfortable for you?"

A sensory friendly setting can support the candidate to feel comfortable and to do their best.

Accessible technology

Ensure digital tools are optimised for accessibility, offering features like adjustable font sizes, screen readers, and simple navigation.

Break spaces

Identify a quiet area where candidates can take breaks before or during the interview. Share details about this space beforehand and include it in the workplace tour.

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Conducting the assessment

An neuro-inclusive approach during the assessment ensures candidates can perform their best.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Time to get comfortable

Allow candidates time to get comfortable in the setting and address any potential distractions or causes of anxiety.

Flexibility

Be open to diverse problem-solving methods and avoid penalising unconventional but effective approaches.

Minimise time pressures

Offer untimed or flexible timeframes to allow candidates to work without unnecessary stress.

Be clear

Provide supportive immediate feedback or clarification if candidates appear uncertain about the task requirements. Be vigilant and considerate of the candidates' feelings and provide support.

Post-assessment feedback

Clear and constructive feedback not only helps candidates understand their performance but also enhances their experience of the recruitment process.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Transparent outcomes

Provide explicit timelines for results and clear instructions for next steps.

Detailed feedback

Share specific observations about where candidates excelled and areas for improvement. Avoid generic responses that fail to provide actionable insights. Invite unsuccessful candidates to request a meeting to discuss further.



By providing detailed feedback unsuccessful candidates can identify areas to improve on when applying for future roles.

Example of a neuro-inclusive Puzzle-based assessment



Scenario

A marketing candidate is tasked with developing a creative campaign. They disclose a preference for a quiet space.



Actions taken

- When the assessment is scheduled is negotiated.
- The assessment room is quiet, with natural lighting and minimal sensory triggers.
- Candidate receives the task details and format in advance, with examples of successful campaigns for reference.
- They are allowed to complete the task over two days, with the flexibility to submit their work digitally.



Outcome

These accommodations enable the candidate to focus on showcasing their creativity and strategic thinking, offering a more accurate evaluation of their suitability for the role.



By allowing a candidate to complete the task over an extended period of time, candidates can take time to complete it to the best of their ability.

Continuous improvement in assessment design

Clear and constructive feedback not only helps candidates understand their performance but also enhances their experience of the recruitment process.



Strategies for improvement



Feedback loop

Collect input from candidates through surveys or focus groups to identify areas for improvement.



Validation by neurodivergent reviewers

Engage neurodivergent individuals to evaluate the accessibility and fairness of assessments.



Regular updates

Ensure tasks remain relevant to job roles and free of biases by conducting periodic reviews and accessibility audits.



Create and implement neuro-inclusive Puzzles, Exercises, and Games Tests

Neuro-inclusive skills assessments utilising Puzzles, Exercises, and Games Tests can create a fair and inclusive recruitment process, supporting all candidates to perform at their best. By designing assessments that are aligned with job requirements, are flexible, and foster a supportive environment, employers can unlock diverse talents while promoting equity in the workplace. These practices not only enhance candidate experience but also contribute to a more innovative workforce.

Learn more and access resources

To learn more about Neuro-inclusive Recruiting and how to create and maintain neuro-inclusive workplaces, scan the QR code or visit neuroinclusiverecruiting.org.au.

