

legal issues.⁶⁷ A work sample is designed to capture parts of the job, for example, a drill press test for machine operators and a programming test for computer programmers.⁶⁸ A performance test is more costly to develop than a work sample, but it is usually a better predictor of job performance.

Motor Versus Verbal Work Samples. A motor work sample test involves the physical manipulation of things. Examples include a driving test and a clothes-making test. A verbal work sample test involves a problem situation requiring language skills and interaction with people. Examples include role-playing tests that simulate contact with customers, and an English test for foreign teaching assistants.

High- Versus Low-Fidelity Tests. A high-fidelity test uses realistic equipment and scenarios to simulate the actual tasks of the job. Therefore, it elicits actual responses encountered in performing the task.⁶⁹ A good example of a high-fidelity test is one used in the petroleum industry to select truck drivers. The test is performed on a computer and mimics all the steps taken to load and unload fuel from a tanker to a fuel reservoir at a service station.⁷⁰ It is not a test of perfect high fidelity, because fuel is not actually unloaded. It is, however, a much safer test because the dangerous process of fuel transfer is simulated rather than performed.

A low-fidelity test simulates the task in a written or verbal description and elicits a written or verbal response rather than an actual response. An example of a low-fidelity test is describing a work situation to job applicants and asking them what they would do in that particular situation. In one study, seven organizations in the telecommunications industry used a written low-fidelity test for the position of manager.⁷¹ Low-fidelity work samples bear many similarities to some types of structured interviews, and in some cases they may be indistinguishable (see “Structured Interview” section).

Work sample tests are becoming more innovative and are increasingly being used for customer service positions. For example, Aon Consulting has developed a web-based simulation called REPeValuator in which applicants assume the role of a customer service specialist. In the simulation, the applicant takes phone calls, participates in Internet chat, and responds to e-mails. The test takes 30 minutes to complete and costs \$20 per applicant. The test provides scores on rapport, problem solving, communication, empathy, and listening skills.⁷² Another interesting work sample test resembles a job tryout, except that the applicant is not hired or compensated. One small business took a promising applicant on a sales call. In this case, although the applicant looked perfect on paper, the sales call revealed troubling aspects to the applicant’s behavior and she wasn’t hired.⁷³ Finally, some technology organizations are hosting “coding competitions” at colleges, where in return for a hefty prize (first-place awards can be as high as \$50,000) and a job offer, students can try to develop software or solve a programming problem. The