



Guide to Assessment Centres

Assessment centres are usually the final stage of any recruitment process and being invited to one is a great achievement. After successfully completing an online assessment or first stage interview, short-listed candidates will be invited to spend either a full day or half a day at the employers offices. This is a great opportunity for you to see your potential working environment, meet some potential work colleagues and most importantly for you to get a sense of how it would feel to work at the company.

Assessment centres involve a combination of tasks and activities that test your suitability for the role that linked back to the competencies required. These activities will either be completed individually or part of the group and before you start you will be given full instructions on what to do and how much time you have to do it. Remember, it's really important to keep focused on your own performance and not to compare yourself to the other candidates.

What type of individual activities are used at an assessment centre?

Below are some of the common individual activities you may encounter:

- **Interview** – this could be a one to one interview or with two interviewers. If you would like some advice on how to prepare for an interview see our 'Guide to Job Interviews' located in the Early Careers section of www.boots.jobs
- **Analysis/Case study** – this activity will normally involve reading through various pieces of information and drawing conclusions or making recommendations to present back in a written or verbal format.
- **Presentation** – presentations briefs may be given in advance of you arriving at the assessment centre or you may be set a brief on the day under a time constraint. Don't forget to always have some structure to your presentation content and to engage with the assessor as you present. Be prepared for questions too.
- **Role play exercise** – this activity is great way to assess how you would perform in a certain situation. It will require you to act out an imaginary scenario that closely matches what could occur in the role you have applied for. Ensure you are clear on who your 'character' is, what the situation is and the role that the assessor is undertaking so that you present the information or your response in the right way.
- **In-tray exercises** – this activity will test your ability to prioritise and respond to tasks in order of importance and urgency.
- **Aptitude tests** – these may be an extension of tests you have already completed during the application process such as verbal and numerical reasoning tests or additional tests relevant to role.



Together we can make feel good happen



Group Activities – Hints and Tips

Group activities can come in a variety of different formats and assess your ability to work as part of a team – how you contribute, solve problems, listen to other people's ideas and put your ideas across. There are a number of different behaviours that the assessors will want to see, so think about how you can demonstrate these within the task you have been set. Below are some hints and tips:

- You need to strike the right balance between speaking too much and not speaking enough. Share your ideas and opinions whilst letting others get involved with the conversations. Don't talk over people, instead listen and allow them to make their point but then find the opportunity to speak up as soon as you can.
- Be confident and ensure you speak loudly and clearly. If the assessor can not hear what you are saying, they can not give you credit for your contribution.
- Don't be afraid to debate your point and challenge others but always be considerate and respectful. If your idea or opinion is not accepted by the group then know when to back down and don't take it personally.
- Bring others into the conversation. If you notice someone has not spoken for a while, ask them directly for their thoughts to get them involved.
- Keep engaged with the conversation and show active listening skills throughout. Don't bury your head into any paperwork or notes.
- Keep track of the time and help the group to structure the task so that the task is completed in the time required.
- If you feel comfortable, offer to note take but do not let this get in the way of contributing to the discussion.





How to prepare for an assessment centre:

- ✓ Read through your invitation carefully this may give you some insights on what to expect on the day and if there is anything you need to prepare in advance, such as a presentation.
- ✓ Don't forget to confirm your attendance, as there could be a number of candidates in reserve.
- ✓ Check if you are required to bring anything with you on the day, such as ID, certificates etc.
- ✓ If uncertain about any aspects of the day, always contact the employer for more information.
- ✓ It may have been some time since you first submitted your application, so take some time to review your CV to make sure all the information you provided is fresh in your mind.
- ✓ The assessment centre will include an interview and it is likely your interviewer may use your CV as a starting point. So be prepared to talk them through every point included.
- ✓ If you are required to give a presentation then ensure you use simple, clear language and commit as much as possible to memory, so you are not relying on notes. Also think about the structure, as all presentations should have an introduction/ overview and summary/end.
- ✓ Check what equipment will be available and the technology/packages you want to use are available and compatible.
- ✓ Always let the company know in advance if you require any adjustments or additional support on the day.
- ✓ Choose your outfit the night before, and get plenty of sleep.
- ✓ Plan your journey, aiming to arrive at least 10-15 minutes early. Completing a 'dry run' if possible also combats nerves.

On the day of the assessment centre:

- ✓ On the day, eat a good, healthy breakfast and avoid too much caffeine.
- ✓ Maintain a friendly and polite manner with everyone you meet.
- ✓ Keep your phone out of sight and on silent, even during breaks.
- ✓ Be confident and engaged throughout the whole day.
- ✓ Ensure that you understand the requirements of each task and take the opportunity to ask questions if you are unsure. Always revisit the brief once you have read the whole task through to check back on what you have been asked to do.
- ✓ Don't dwell on any mistakes, instead concentrate on performing well in the next task.
- ✓ Don't worry about the other candidates or compare yourself to them. Just focus on yourself.
- ✓ Join in with discussions, even during 'informal' break times.
- ✓ Take the opportunity to ask questions and learn about the business.
- ✓ Try to relax, be yourself and let your personality shine through.

After the assessment centre:

- ✓ Establish timescales on the day as to when you should expect to hear the outcome of the assessment centre.
- ✓ If you are unsuccessful, use the opportunity as a learning experience and always ask for feedback.