

# [Individual differences a brief overview psychology essay](https://assignbuster.com/individual-differences-a-brief-overview-psychology-essay/)

A person differing from others is understandable, but how and why a person differs is less clear and is therefore a subject of the study of individual differences (Revelle, 2000). Individual differences are the differences among individuals, in regards to a single characteristic or number of characteristics, which in their totality distinguish one individual from another and make oneself a unique individual (Mangal, 2007). Characteristics that define individual differences can be classified into four main categories: Learning Style, Aptitude, Personality and Emotional Intelligence.

## 1. 2 Learning Style

Learning Style refers to the idea that every individual is different in regard to what manner of coaching or study is most useful for them (Pashler, et al., 2008). Some learn best by hearing information, while others see and/or write down information (Cherry, 2012). According to David Kolb; learning involves the gaining of abstract concepts, which are the intangible ideas that can be applied fluidly in a variety of situations, leading to knowledge (McLeod, 2013).

Kolb’s experience-based learning style theory is a four stage learning cycle in which effective learning can only be seen when an individual is able to accomplish all four stages of the cycle (McLeod, 2013). The cycle consists of: Concrete Experience ƒ  Reflective Observation ƒ  Abstract Conceptualization ƒ  Active Experimentation (McLeod, 2013).

Concrete Experience: A new experience or situation is encountered, or a reinterpretation of an existing experience.

Reflective Observation: Surveillance of others or developing interpretations about one’s own knowledge/experience.

Abstract Conceptualization: Daydreaming/Intuition/Reflection leads to a new idea, or a variation of an existing abstract concept – learners create theories to explain observations.

Active Experimentation: The learner applies its knowledge/experience/observations to the world around them in real time to see its outcome – using theories to explain/answer problems and make proper judgments.

## 1. 3 Aptitude

The term aptitude is sometimes treated the same as abilities, particularly when the focus is on prediction of performance in other settings or occasions (Kyllonen & Gitomer, 2002). Abilities are cognitive or mental characteristics that affect one’s potential to learn or to perform, whereas aptitude includes any number of individual-differences factors that influence one’s willingness or chances of learning or performing successfully (Kyllonen & Gitomer, 2002). Even Aptitude and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tend to relate in view of human mental ability, however, they are in fact quite the opposite. IQ sees intelligence as being a single measurable characteristic affecting all mental ability, whereas aptitude breaks mental ability down into many different characteristics which are supposed to be more or less independent of each other (wikia. com, 2013).

Similarly – skills, abilities and aptitudes are related but are separate descriptions of what a person can do, and thus, should not be conflated (wikia. com, 2013). Skills describe what a person has learned to do in the past (wikia. com, 2013); abilities describe what a person can do now (wikia. com, 2013); aptitudes, however, describe a person’s potential to learn from the past and apply its learning in the future (wikia. com, 2013). All these describe what and how a person can learn to do something effectively.

## 1. 4 Personality

Personality explains the unique characteristics of individuals, as well as relationships among groups of people (Cherry, 2011). A person is able to stand out in the crowd due its personality; this is made up of the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in an individual (Cherry, 2011). Although some outer forces can influence how certain characteristics are expressed, personality originates from inside an individual. While a few characteristics of personality may change with age, personality is likely to remain somewhat reliable during the whole life (Cherry, 2011). The major characteristics of personality are (Cherry, 2011):

Personality is Organized and Consistent: People tend to communicate certain features of their personality in various circumstances and their responses are usually stable.

Personality is Psychological, but is influenced by Biological Needs and Processes: While an individual’s personality might lead him/her to be calm in normal situations, but when threatened or provoked it might lead him/her to be more aggressive.

Personality ’causes’ behaviors to happen: People respond to others and objects in their surroundings based on their personality. From private preferences to choice of profession, every facet of their existence is affected by their personality.

Personality is displayed through thoughts, feelings, behaviors and many other ways: An individual’s presence/existence all together releases energy of good or bad vibes depending on how they connect with all that encompasses their surroundings.

## 1. 5 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to process emotions (Toyota, 2011); it is the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings, to differentiate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action (Salovey & Grewal, 2005). A four-branch model, proposed by Mayer and Salovey, identifies EI as a set of four related abilities: Perceiving, Using, Understanding, and Managing Emotions (Salovey & Grewal, 2005).

Perceiving Emotions: The ability to detect and interpret emotions in faces, pictures, voices, and cultural artifacts. It also includes the ability to identify one’s own emotions.

Using Emotions: The ability to control emotions to smooth the progress of various cognitive activities, such as thinking and problem solving.

Understanding Emotions: The ability to understand emotion language and to value complex affairs among emotions. Furthermore, it includes the ability to recognize and describe how emotions develop over time, such as how shock can turn into grief.

Managing Emotions: Consists of the ability to manage and normalize emotions in both ourselves and in others.

## Task for M1:

## 2. 0 Choose a psychometric test for each type that would yield the most valid and reliable results in the workplace.

## 2. 1 Psychometric Test – A Brief Overview

Psychometric tests are structured assessments that aim to measure, without bias, characteristics of an individual’s mental capacity, or aspects of their personality (Price, 2010). Business employers use it as it offers greater objectivity, reliability and validity than interviews; and also helps provide additional information that helps the employer to create an overall profile of employees and to foresee how they will function in the workplace (HJB. com, 2013). The tests are homogeneous, which means that all applicants sit the same assessment and are scored according to the same criteria, no matter where or when the test is completed (HJB. com, 2013). However, taking a wide range of tests depends upon individuals’ needs as to how they approach or want to approach their personal development (Becker, 2011). Focusing on improving weak areas of performance can lead to great progress in achieving objectives when strengths are identified and developed (Becker, 2011). Therefore, psychometric testing can assist in choosing the approach that will deliver the most benefit.

## 2. 2 Types of Psychometric Tests

Psychometric assessments fall under two groups. The first measures and evaluates an individual’s ability to understand verbal/written words or their ability to reason with numerical figures (Farrington, 2007), or to follow directions as asked (Price, 2010). The second measures personality traits through personality tests (Farrington, 2007), assessing everything from motivation to values, from personality inclinations to working preferences (Price, 2010). In the world of employment, the choice of test is extremely vital since such tests are used: during the recruitment phase to select the best candidate, or to help select candidates for career advancement (Price, 2010). As a result, tests are gradually more customized to the jobs they are used for.

## 2. 3 Learning Style Psychometric Test

The Learning Styles Questionnaire (LSQ) was developed to determine an individual’s preferred learning style (PsychPress. com, 2013). There are four learning styles (Watts, 2007):

Activist: Engage themselves fully in all new experiences.

Reflector: Like to pause and take time to evaluate their experiences from every angle.

Theorist: Like to adapt what they see into their own words in order to create their own theories, which are accurate but can appear overly complicated.

Pragmatist: Are eager to try out fresh ways of doing things to see if they can be put into practice and yield results.

Most people prefer certain learning styles over others. As a result, their preference tends to misrepresent the learning procedure as such that greater emphasis is placed on some stages to the disadvantage of the other stages (PsychPress. com, 2013). Therefore, LSQs provide a key to understanding these different preferences. People gain learning styles through repetition of successful strategies and tactics while they put an end to those that are not, which leads to the development of preferences for different behavioral patterns that become habitual (PsychPress. com, 2013). Therefore, LSQs help people to learn effectively about themselves so that they may be saved from inapt learning experiences. A thorough understanding of learning styles through LSQs enable the tailoring of education and training programs to suit an individual or group (PsychPress. com, 2013). Particular forms of learning to which individuals respond can be identified through LSQs which aids in improving individual and group performance. This also makes training and development as well as other learning activities valuable and less challenging for the participants, and thus helps in reducing training costs by saving valuable time (PsychPress. com, 2013).

## 2. 4 Aptitude Psychometric Test

Aptitude tests attempt to measure trait intelligence (IQ) and cognitive ability in individuals from the indication of their efficiency in processing information (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). Intelligence is either fluid or crystallized (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). Crystallized intelligence involves verbal or language-based accumulated knowledge developed mainly through education and other life experiences (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). However, fluid intelligence indicates adaptability and flexibility in the face of new experiences that do not allow automated reasoning (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). An example would be where logic is needed in identifying an odd shape from a number of shapes in an odd-one-out type question.

Since an individual’s aptitude is complex, Computerized Adaptive Testing (CAT) is used. It is a widely accepted method of online psychometric testing that includes aptitude tests, reasoning tests, verbal reasoning tests and numerical reasoning tests (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). Although the programming, testing properties and science behind CAT are quite complex, the course, as experienced by the candidate, is not (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013). Even though the test is taken online, it has many advantages compared to written tests such as: reduced administration time, reduced test-taking time, increased reliability for measuring applicants’ aptitude, trims down the quantity of items in online psychometric tests by optimally customizing items to the candidate, practice for CAT-based tests is identical to practicing traditional online psychometric tests, all of it is computer-based and administered online, thus, practicing for these types of psychometric tests is considered ideal (PsychometricInstitute. com, 2013).

## 2. 5 Personality Psychometric Test

Personality tests are assessments which assess an individual’s somewhat stable behavioral trends and preferences within an occupational perspective (PsychPress. com, 2013). Such tests also require the least preparation (PsychPress. com, 2013). Personality tests are based on behavior mainly due to the indirect and complex nature of an individual’s personality (PsychPress. com, 2013). If used appropriately, these tests can be extremely helpful in improving knowledge of one’s self and other people.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a personality test designed to indicate the psychological types of an individual’s personality, its strengths and preferences (Cherry, 2012) so as to find out the reasons for individual differences (Price, 2012). MBTI aims to let candidates discover and understand more about their own personalities which includes; likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, job preferences and compatibility with others (Cherry, 2012). One other thing worth noting is that the questions in these tests have no allocated correct answer (Price, 2012) because no one personality type is “ best” or “ better” than any other one (Cherry, 2012). This test isn’t a means to look for dysfunction or abnormality, but rather help individuals learn more about themselves (Cherry, 2012). The test is made up of four different scales (Cherry, 2012):

Extraversion (E) – Introversion (I): Extraverts are more open and lively, they are more social, and they are filled with energy after spending time with other people. Introverts are more into themselves; they tend to think a lot, they enjoy meaningful social interactions, and are filled with energy after spending time alone.

Sensing (S) – Intuition (N): This scale indicates how people collect information from their surroundings. Individuals, who pay a great deal of attention to reality, especially to what they can learn from their own senses, are sensing. Those who are intuitive consider stuff like patterns and impressions.

Thinking (T) – Feeling (F): This scale focuses on decisions people make that are based on information they gather through their sensing or intuition functions. People are more into thinking when they stress on facts and objectives data. People who put greater emphasis on feelings arrive at a conclusion based on people and emotions.

Judging (J) – Perceiving (P): This scale is about how people tend to deal with the outside world. People who like structure and firm decisions are more judging. People who are more open, flexible and adaptable, are more perceiving.

Due to MBTI ease of use, it has become one of the most popular psychological instruments. According to the Myers & Briggs Foundation, the MBTI meets accepted standards of reliability and validity (Cherry, 2012).

## 2. 6 Emotional Intelligence Psychometric Test

Emotional Intelligence (EI) tests help evaluate several aspects of an individual’s EI and suggest ways to improve it (Queendom. com, 2013), so that they can understand the level of their relation with emotions (Agarwal, 2007). It helps an individual to understand themselves better in order to deal better with themselves, and know what to avoid and what not to (Agarwal, 2007).

The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) is the most often used test of emotional intelligence (Daniels, 2010). This test focuses on emotions rather than intellectual skills (Daniels, 2010). MSCEIT comprises items such as to; identify the emotion in given pictures of people’s faces, select which emotion can help achieve particular tasks, understand the way emotions interact and blend among them, and to recognize how they can use their emotions in difficult social situations (Daniels, 2010). The MSCEIT measures emotional intelligence in terms of four key competencies, including an individual’s ability to: (i) Recognize their own and others’ emotions, (ii) Generate and use emotions in problem solving, (iii) Understand emotions and how emotions may change, and (iv) Manage their own and others’ emotions (Onetest. com, 2010).

It has been confirmed that people with high EI prove to be thriving in life than those with lower EI, even if their Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is average (Queendom. com, 2013). This is because people with higher EI are better able to express their emotions in a healthy way, and better able to understand the emotions of colleagues; therefore, leading to better work relationships and performance. In the workplace, it leads to successful leadership, increased productivity and higher customer satisfaction (Onetest. com, 2010). On a personal level, it ultimately leads to a more successful and fruitful life.

## Task for P2:

## 3. 0 Assess the usefulness of psychometric instruments in the workplace.

## 3. 1 Psychometric Tests

As mentioned in M1 Task; Psychometric tests include personality profiles, reasoning tests, motivation questionnaires, and ability assessments. These tests try to provide objective data for otherwise subjective measurements. For example, if you want to determine someone’s attitude, you can ask the person directly, observe the person in action, or even gather observations about the person from other people. However, all of these methods can be affected by personal bias and perspective. By using a psychometric test, you make a more objective and impartial judgment.

Since objectivity is the key to using these assessments, a good psychometric test provides fair and accurate results each time it’s given. To ensure this, the test must meet these three key criteria:

Standardization: The test must be based on results from a sample population that’s truly representative of the people who’ll be taking the test. You can’t realistically test every working person in a country. But you can test a representative sample of that group, and then apply the results to the specific people whom you test. Also, a standardized test is administered the same way every time to help reduce any test bias. By using a standardized test, you can compare the results with anyone whose characteristics are similar to those of the sample group.

Reliability: The test must produce consistent results, and not be significantly influenced by outside factors. For instance, if you’re feeling stressed when you take the test, the test results shouldn’t be overly different from times when you were excited or relaxed.

Validity: This is perhaps the most important quality of a test. A valid test has to measure what it’s intended to measure. If a test is supposed to measure a person’s interests, then it must clearly demonstrate that it does actually measure interests, and not something else that’s just related to interests.

## 3. 2 Psychometric Tests in the Workplace

Psychometric tests have become a well established tool in the workplace, particularly in large organizations where 70% claim to use some form of psychometric measure as part of the recruitment process. They are also increasingly used for career planning, team building, management development, counseling and succession planning. Many individuals also use them to evaluate their own attributes and as evidence for potential employers.

## 3. 3 Usefulness of Psychometric Tests – Workplace

Psychometric test is useful in:

Selection of Personnel: By applying psychometric tests when hiring workers, we are able to judge their competency core objectively. For example, here at Galactic Space, when we were hiring someone for monitoring gaming, we interviewed a person named Raees Gul. He applied for the post of working as a waiter, but when we interviewed him and gave him a set of questionnaires which consisted of different questions on the different departments of the lounge, we concluded he was better at gaming.

Task Allocation: It has great use in task allocation of employees when we gain in-depth knowledge of their strength and weaknesses, through which we can easily judge which area they would work best at.

Finding Personality: Having detailed knowledge of employee’s personality helps us in understanding how to communicate with them and deal with them during various circumstances.

## Task for D1:

## 4. 0 Make justified recommendations for the use of two types of measures in making business decisions.

## 4. 1 Decision-Making Predicament

The present-day world presents complex decision-making challenges, be it in a business environment or day-to-day personal situations. As we’re discussing issues related to a business environment, we will focus on decisions that are related to the various dilemmas in the business world. For example; decisions made during staff selection and training, since companies request for specific profiles with precise individual qualities and knowledge about competencies related to a specific field; or decisions related to making an investment with high risk but with high returns, since shareholders are looking forward to high profits.

## 4. 2 Aptitude & Business Decisions

Since we mentioned in P1 that every human being is complex, therefore their aptitudes are also complex. Employment specialists, that are part of the Human Resource Department, mostly use aptitude tests to determine whether someone is a good fit for a job or promotion, have the ability to adapt to a new work environment and culture, and are able to process information systematically. It is very important because to understand aptitude is to understand their mental and physical attributes. For example; a person who has good analytical skills, the will to take justified risks and bear pressure, can well be suited in the finance department (provided that he has a finance background). Since people’s ability to process information is limited; therefore, knowing that they can adopt a variety of heuristics or “ rules of thumb” when making decisions can help solve business problems, assist in product choice and consumption option, and most importantly, their personal lives. A heuristic is a mental shortcut that allows people to solve problems and make decisions fast and efficiently (Cherry, 2011). Thus, this helps shorten decision-making time and allow people to function without constantly stopping to think about the next course of action (Cherry, 2011). Although heuristics are helpful in many situations, they can also lead to biases in decision making. Nevertheless, how they influence business and consumer decisions in everyday life is golden.

## 4. 3 Emotional Intelligence in Business Decisions

In a world where people are facing unparalleled hardships, their emotions are spilling out in uncontrollable measures. Since experts claim that EI could be responsible for as much as 80% of any success (StarlightPsych, 2013); therefore, many businesses are interested in the EI of their workforce because understanding the EI of future employees can have clear benefits. It can be the difference between a successful and a risky hire (StarlightPsych, 2013); the latter should obviously be avoided to prevent a business, especially a big one, from facing dire consequences. Conducting EI tests also helps evaluate important aspects of work-related activities where the management can know beforehand on; how to deal with emotionally charged situations where stress and anger is involved, the manner of workforce relating themselves to their superiors and colleagues, the ability to learn, follow leadership, and so on. We also mentioned in M1 that work relationships and performance are directly related to the EI of the workforce. Every human being has emotions, and motivation plays a large role in pushing emotions to its limit. Therefore, when management tap into the positive energy of EI, it can not only make work life easier for them and the workforce, but also lead to a better connection with top-level management through; top notch performance, lowered employee absenteeism, improved productivity and efficiency, and last but not the least, increased overall profits.

## 4. 4 Conclusion

Although there is no right answer as to which type of measure can lead to good or near-perfect business decisions, employing some or all measures can at least reduce bias in the results. For example, in a situation where a person seems to have a low IQ does not make him/her a dumb person, since that person might have a better EI, or even a great personality that makes him a much better person when it comes to ethics. It’s a never-ending battle between right and wrong, true and false, dumb and smart, etc. All we can hope is that all this brings human beings closer together, regardless of their psychoanalytic assumptions.