

Tool 6: Designing a Practical Test

A short practical test is invaluable for any recruitment, whether for newcomers or Canadians. In general, any practical test should be the same for both, but remember:

- Do not penalize candidates for using different terminology or jargon – they will soon pick up yours.

Designing a practical test is in many ways like “Tool 3: Designing an English writing test.” For most jobs there are practical tasks that are typical of the job, and you can learn a lot from observing candidates as they perform. The key is to select an appropriate task.

1. Consider the job the candidate is being interviewed for. Are there any aspects of the tasks that could be separated out as a practical test? Are these tasks so central to the job that they provide a good indicator of the candidate’s likely overall performance? For example, a civil engineer might be supplied with rainfall data and a map, and asked to design the size of a culvert to go under a road, or a structural engineer might be asked to design the size of a beam in a structure, or a laboratory worker might be asked to perform a standard test on a sample, etc.
2. Remember that a newcomer to Canada may be used to different equipment and data sheets, and may be used to having assistants perform some of the work. Nevertheless, you can learn much by observing how the candidate performs.
3. Keep the test as true to life as possible, so that you can be confident that the results will accurately reflect how the candidate will perform at work. The test results will also help to identify any additional skills and knowledge that will need to be developed if the candidate is recruited.
4. Keep the test as short as possible, preferably less than 15 minutes. With the time required to brief the candidate beforehand and then to provide feedback, the total time required can easily expand to 30 minutes.
5. Identify key aspects of the test that you want to see, and use them to create an assessment chart. The chart does not need to give marks; it can be as simple as competent / not competent, or perhaps: outstanding / competent / capable of becoming competent / incapable.
6. Ensure that the candidate (and others including the observer and any equipment) will be safe during the test.

Use the same marking system as for the English Writing Test:

SATISFACTORY - “Demonstrates acceptable proficiency”

NEED TO DEVELOP - “Does not yet show acceptable proficiency but has potential”

UNLIKELY TO DEVELOP – “Currently unable to perform in at least one significant aspect”

Funding provided by: