

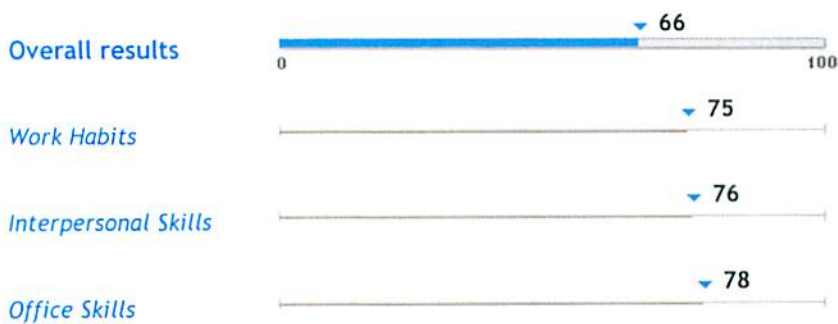
Clerical Job Fit Test

Report for: Joan Sample

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Summary

The Administrative Job Fit Test is designed to help human resource managers and employers assess a candidate's potential for being a competent Administrative Assistant. The goal is to determine whether or not there is a match between the job requirements and the test-taker's personality and skills. This test battery includes the following three scales: Work Attitudes, Interpersonal Skills, and Technical Skills.



Recommended for a clerical/administrative job.

According to his/her test results, Joan would likely do well in a career as an administrative or clerical worker. Although s/he scored above average on most scales, there are some areas that s/he could improve on. With a concerted effort, s/he could excel in this field. Overall, from a psychological point of view, s/he is well suited for a position in the clerical field.

Introduction

Administrative and clerical workers rank amongst the largest occupational groups in today's economy. Whether it's a small, privately owned business or a huge multimillion dollar corporation, all trades require the aid of these hard workers. In essence, everyone in an office relies on these individuals to keep operations under control, running smoothly and efficiently. In other words, without these employees, the world of business would be largely unproductive and disorganized. To ensure this balance, clerical workers provide a wide range of services which are crucial for all organizations.

While most clerical workers perform tasks such as planning, scheduling meetings and appointments as well as organizing and maintaining files, they also often serve as an executive's "right hand" - a trusty employee ready to add input and their services wherever and whenever necessary. Furthermore, these employees may also act as liaisons between executives and clients; therefore, it is vital that these workers possess excellent communication skills as well as a pleasant and approachable personality.

A career in the clerical field is not for everyone. Today's competitive environment demands more from office support personnel than ever before. The job requires excellent interpersonal skills, and the ability to work well in a hectic and demanding environment. The changes in office automation, due to advances in technology, also require office workers to be adaptable and versatile - they need to be open to the idea of continuing education and regular re-training in order to keep up-to-date with computer software and office equipment.

The following is a brief overview of the different scales covered in this test, and the impact they have on the administrative/clerical field.

Work Habits

The following subscales are used to assess Work Habits: Conscientiousness, Time Management, Concentration, Initiative, Adaptability/Trainability and Tolerance for Routine Work.

- **Conscientiousness** Conscientiousness refers to being thorough, careful, and keeping one's word. These are highly desirable skills for clerical workers, who work in a field where a missed detail could cost the company a lot of money, and maybe even its reputation.
- **Diligence** Diligent people work steadily and industriously. Office workers are expected to be very hardworking individuals since, for the most part, they are largely responsible for the daily operations of the business.
- **Organization** Effective organization relates to managing materials and time, as well as being able to divide time and energy effectively between tasks. Organization comes into play especially when scheduling appointments and meetings, as well as maintaining records in an orderly fashion.
- **Dependability** Employers rely on clerical workers a great deal to keep their business running smoothly and effectively. Therefore, it is essential that workers be reliable as well as keep their word.
- **Attention to Detail** Meticulousness refers to attention to detail. In clerical work, even the smallest of details can be very significant. For example, when typing up a report for a client, a misspelled name or even a wrong phone number can result in serious repercussions.
- **Efficiency** Efficiency is the ability to use the time and skill available in an appropriate and

practical manner. It involves prioritizing tasks and developing templates, shortcuts, or standard procedures in order to complete work in a time-effective manner.

- **Self-discipline** Self-discipline refers to the training and control of oneself and one's conduct. Administrative and clerical workers must be very self-disciplined since they do not usually work under much supervision. Employers will assign them multiple tasks with the expectation that they will complete them promptly and properly.
- **Time Management** Clerical workers must be able to manage their time wisely and effectively. These employees are responsible for many tasks and duties which they must be able to prioritize and complete in a time efficient manner.
- **Concentration** Administrative and clerical workers must be able to keep their focus on what needs to be done. They often have a wide range of duties to undertake and therefore, must be able to stay on track and get things done without allowing distraction to set in.
- **Adaptability/Trainability** Office workers who are adaptable and versatile are in high demand due to constant developments in office technology. People who do clerical and administrative work must be open to the possibility of retraining and continuing education in order to keep-up-to-date with the latest computer software and office automation.
- **Tolerance for Routine Work** Since many clerical tasks are repetitive, the ability to tolerate routine is essential. These individuals must adhere to certain procedures, as many duties in this field have to be done "by the book".

Interpersonal Skills

The following subscales are used to assess Interpersonal Skills: Communication Skills, Conflict Resolution Skills, Agreeableness, Emotional Strength, Helpfulness, Discretion, and Reaction to Criticism.

- **Communication Skills** Many office clerks are responsible for answering telephones and greeting customers so it is important to possess excellent communication skills. These skills consist of delivering concise messages to others and, equally important, being able to take the important points from what others say. Another related skill is the ability to regulate emotions.
- **Conflict Resolution Skills** Clerical employees usually act as liaisons between executives and clients therefore, if conflict arises, these individuals must possess the skills necessary to resolve the issue in the most effective manner possible.
- **Approachability** A positive and agreeable attitude is essential among clerical workers. They need to be willing to take on whatever demands and tasks are set upon them by their employer with a positive attitude. They also must be able to work well with others.
- **Willingness to Compromise** Office workers must be willing to compromise when a difference in opinion arises, especially when dealing with clients.
- **Likeability** Candidates must also have an approachable and pleasant presence and attitude since a large part of their job will involve working with others in the company and the public.
- **Desire for Control** Since office personnel work under authority, it is necessary for them to follow direction and instructions willingly and enthusiastically. To succeed in this field, one must work well as a team player.
- **Emotional Strength** Emotional stability refers to overall calmness and emotional well being. Administrative and clerical workers are often faced with difficult situations and people that they must deal with in a composed manner.
- **Helpfulness** Much is demanded of office workers, be it from bosses or the public. Being cooperative, patient and willing to offer a helping hand is core to this field - the title "assistant" emphasizes this point.
- **Discretion** Clerical workers could very well have access to private information of customers,

especially those who work within the medical or financial fields. Candidates must show good judgment and be able to keep confidential information private. They should display self-restraint in speech and behavior and be aware of the potential consequences of their disclosures.

- **Reaction to Criticism** Clerical workers must be willing to accept and learn from constructive criticism. Since they will be working with a variety of people, they will often be exposed to both constructive and destructive criticism. Thus, they must be able to accept this without feeling attacked or helpless. A successful candidate will channel criticism in a way that enables them to learn and benefit from such feedback.

Office Skills

The following subscales are used to assess Office Skills: Arithmetic, Short-term Memory, Filing, Typing and Proofreading, Data Entry, Chart Reading and Reading Comprehension.

- **Arithmetic** Bookkeepers in particular make numerous computations each day and therefore must be comfortable calculating and recording data. They check figures, postings, and documents to ensure that they are correct, mathematically accurate, and properly coded. This test contains questions that measure commonly used math skills, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and percentages.

- **Filing** Despite many technological advances, there are companies that still use a manual filing system. Therefore, in order to test this ability, candidates are asked to select the correct location for filing documents based on names and numbers, compare texts to see if they differ, and insert names and numbers into correct alphabetical and numerical order.

- **Short-term Memory** Administrative assistants and clerical workers must be able to hold different pieces of information in their memory, particularly when speaking on the phone. For example, they may need to remember names of clients, companies, suppliers, etc. Having such information readily available in a short-term memory saves time.

- **Typing/Proofreading** It is essential for administrative and clerical workers to possess these abilities, since a large part of their responsibilities require such skills. In this test, individuals are asked to select and correct misspelled and misused words, while typing at an adept speed.

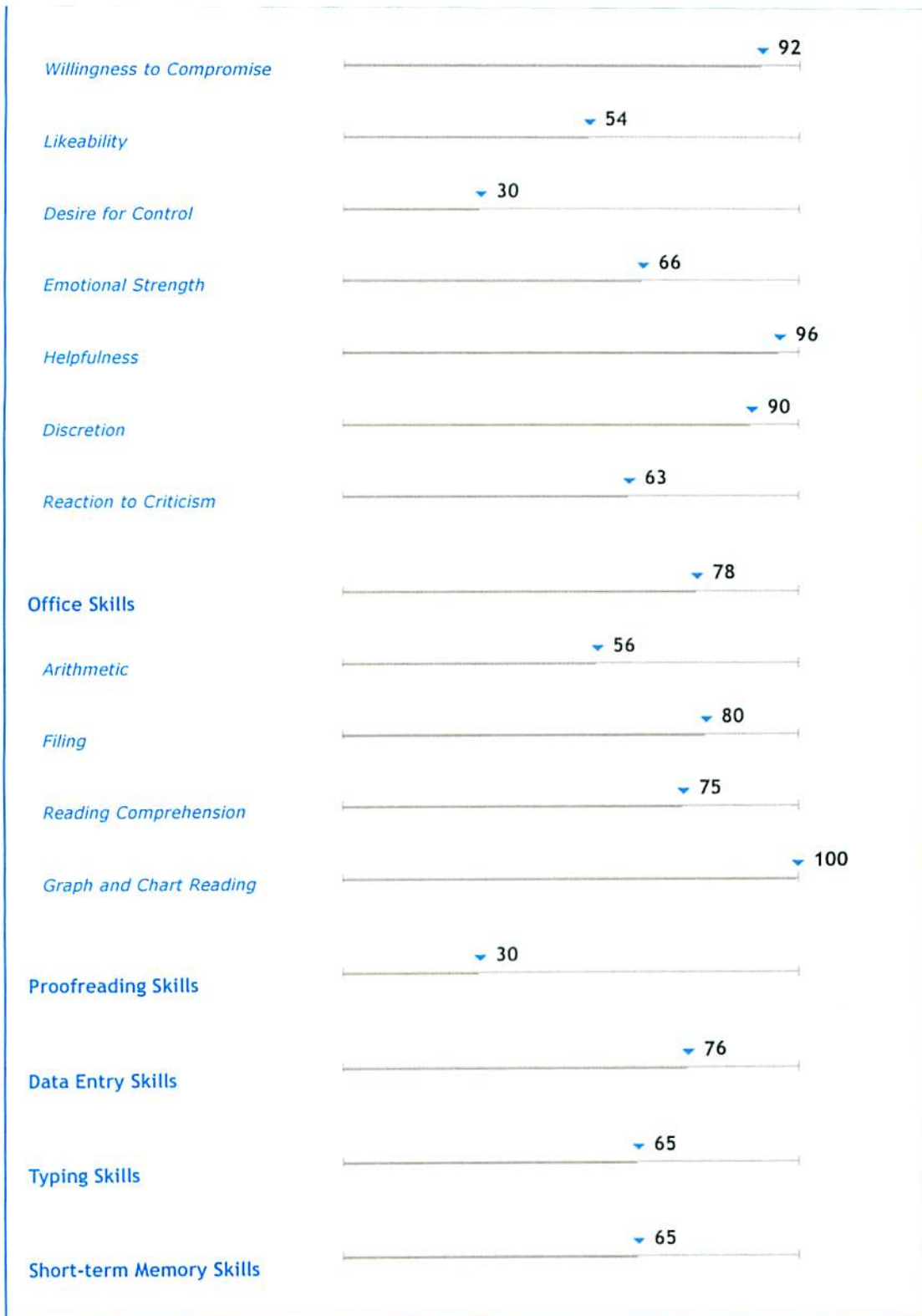
- **Data Entry** Since clerical workers will likely also be performing data entry, it is also necessary to be able to work with speed and accuracy. Using the computer keyboard, test-takers will be asked to record information into its correct format when entering data. Scores are based on speed and accuracy of input.

- **Chart/Graph Reading** Clerical workers must be able to understand basic chart graphs to obtain the relevant information they provide in a timely manner. For example, if your employer handed you a series of charts and asked you to write up a report on the explanation of their figures, he/she would expect you to do so accurately. Therefore, understanding basic graph formats, such as charts, is a very useful skill to have when working within the clerical field.

- **Reading Comprehension** Reading Comprehension skills are essential for good time management, which is a very admirable trait in clerical workers. Candidates must be able to fully comprehend information they are required to read, and avoid having to re-read the same paragraph over and over when doing so.

Graphs





Details

Overall results (score 66)

Recommended for a clerical/administrative job.

According to his/her test results, Joan would likely do well in a career as an administrative or clerical worker. Although s/he scored above average on most scales, there are some areas that s/he could improve on. With a concerted effort, s/he could excel in this field. Overall, from a psychological point of view, s/he is well suited for a position in the clerical field.

Overall suitability for a job in the administrative field.

Work Habits (score 75)

Joan's score indicates that s/he has fairly good work habits. These are the skills that will allow him/her to get his/her work done both effectively and efficiently. Although s/he did rather well in this area, there is still room for improvement.

Assesses skills needed to work effectively and efficiently.

Diligence (score 72)

His/Her score on the Diligence scale indicates that Joan is rather diligent. S/he perseveres in meeting goals by being deliberate and focused. S/he is dutiful and works hard to complete a task properly. S/he keeps his/her goal in mind and works according to perceived expectations. While s/he doesn't always make reaching his/her goals his/her top priority, s/he usually completes his/her tasks or projects, even if it's not perfectly on time.

Measures determination, purposefulness, and the ability to work according to the expectations of others.

Organization (score 63)

Joan is a fairly methodical and orderly person. S/he usually incorporates systems into various areas of his/her life. S/he is able to organize his/her time, tasks and belongings in an orderly fashion, but on a few occasions, may not stick to this routine. While planning and orderliness are not his/her primary concerns, s/he puts in a concerted effort to live an organized life.

Measures how well a person manages materials, time and divvies up energy.

Time Management (score 67)

It seems that Joan has a pretty good grasp of both the basics and the more advanced strategies for effective time management. S/he has developed the skills of setting priorities, cutting down on distractions and following schedules. S/he recognizes that s/he may have to say no to other people from time to time in order to get things done, and goes out of his/her way to find more effective ways of accomplishing tasks. While s/he may give in to certain bad habits on occasion, s/he manages to keep the slip-ups to a minimum, which surely makes his/her career run much more smoothly - not to mention giving

Measures the ability to manage time effectively and efficiently.

him/her the reputation of a productive, reliable individual.

Dependability (score 96)

Joan scored very high on the Dependability scale, which indicates that s/he almost always does what s/he says s/he will. When s/he makes commitments, s/he keeps them and takes pride in doing so. Coworkers and friends alike can count on him/her to keep his/her word and to do a complete and thorough job on any task. S/he is reliable and loyal, and does his/her best to keep his/her promises.

Measures the extent to which a person is true to his or her word when a commitment is made.

Attention to Detail (score 87)

Joan's results indicate that s/he is very attentive to detail. S/he always ties up all loose ends before declaring a project complete. S/he is meticulous and usually spots details or errors which others have missed. To him/her, there is no such thing as an insignificant detail because every finer point counts; a complete job is having accounted for every step, down to the smallest element. Just make sure that s/he doesn't go a little overboard and become too much of a perfectionist.

Measures meticulousness and the willingness to spend time looking for small errors.

Efficiency (score 67)

According to Joan's score, s/he is an efficient individual who is usually looking for ways to save time, energy, and material. Although s/he doesn't always complete his/her tasks in the most time-effective manner, s/he frequently implements shortcuts into his/her day in order to increase efficiency whenever possible or convenient.

Measures the ability to use the time and skill available in an appropriate and practical manner.

Self-discipline (score 63)

While Joan is usually able to overcome reluctance for unpleasant tasks, at times s/he fails to motivate himself/herself to accomplish his/her goals. However, s/he has the willpower to keep at difficult or unpleasant tasks until they are completed. S/he takes responsibility for his/her life and is generally able to overcome personal barriers, such as fatigue or boredom, in order to accomplish both daily tasks and overall goals.

Measures the ability to control and apply oneself.

Concentration (score 79)

Joan's test results indicate that s/he has a knack for concentration - or at least s/he has developed some tricks that help him/her zone in on important tasks. S/he is usually able to shut out the distractions around him/her to give his/her full attention to whatever s/he is working on. S/he can recognize an interrupting thought when it pops into his/her head and has the mental focus to boot it out to get back to work. Part of his/her proficiency likely stems from a sense of confidence; s/he believes that s/he can, and will, be able to learn or accomplish something before s/he sets out to do it. This determination allows him/her to clear his/her mind and get the job done, while keeping it from wandering off on unrelated tangents.

Measures the ability to focus despite distractions.

Initiative (score 84)

Joan is highly driven, which means s/he takes steps to increase his/her own productivity and take the initiative to optimize the company's success. When opportunity arises, s/he volunteers to work on it right away. His/Her motivation to improve things means s/he often comes up with new ideas and projects, which s/he likely has the incentive to implement on his/her own. When a task needs completing, whether it is his/her responsibility or not, s/he sees that it gets taken care of.

Assesses the ability to follow through ambitiously with a plan or task.

Adaptability/Trainability (score 67)

Joan seems to be a flexible person and adapting to change, for the most part, is not a problem for him/her. S/he is open-minded and willing to learn and explore, which takes energy and courage. In light of new developments s/he is willing to go with the flow, as well as change his/her opinions if necessary. Technological advances in office automation have increased the demand for clerical workers who are adaptable and versatile. Therefore a promising and successful candidate would be open to and optimistic about the possibility of retraining and continuing their education to keep up-to-date.

Measures the ability to adapt to change or go with the flow.

Tolerance for Routine Work (score 78)

According to Joan's results, s/he seems to be the type of person who is comfortable with routine work. Repetitive tasks may bore him/her on the rare occasion, but s/he rarely loses focus or motivation. For the most part, s/he enjoys the structure of having a set schedule, so an occupation that doesn't have much variety in its tasks would likely suit him/her well. Clerical jobs are, for the most part, fairly routine.

Measures comfort and contentment with routine work.

Interpersonal Skills (score 76)

Joan's results indicate that his/her interpersonal skills are fairly good, but could use a little work. It is essential for clerical workers to have excellent interpersonal skills since a large part of the job involves working with clients. It would well worth the effort to improve in this area.

Ability to interact with others appropriately, effectively and productively.

Communication Skills (score 77)

According to his/her results, Joan is generally able to listen to others to understand where they are coming from. S/he is also quite proficient at getting his/her point across clearly when engaged in conversation. If s/he would like to develop his/her full potential and bring his/her communication skills to an even higher level, all s/he needs is a little effort. Being able to sense what others are feeling from non-verbal clues and being aware of his/her own role in the process can make all the difference between smooth communication and misunderstandings.

Assesses the ability to listen, convey a smooth and succinct message, and control emotions while engaged in the communication process.

Conflict Resolution Skills (score 77)

Everyone must deal with conflict, whether it is professional or personal. People who deal well with conflict can minimize the damage caused by interpersonal disagreement, and come out of uncomfortable

Refers to the ability and willingness to

social situations in one piece. They can turn problems and disagreements into an opportunity to strengthen the relationship and build trust. Those who do not have this capability end up making mountains out of molehills, losing friendships or tarnishing work relations in the process. According to his/her results, Joan has fairly good conflict resolution skills. Unless s/he had a score of 100% though, there is always room for improvement. Conflict is an unavoidable fact of life - s/he might as well make the best of it. S/he would do well to put in a little effort to improve his/her comfort and ability to deal with conflict - s/he is almost there.

confront conflict in a way that doesn't intensify the situation, but rather resolves it to suit both parties.

Willingness to Compromise (score 92)

Joan dislikes confrontation and is willing to compromise a lot to achieve peace. S/he is compliant and yielding under conflict. S/he works towards agreement, even subordinating his/her personal needs to those of the group in order to achieve harmony. S/he is willing to integrate his/her ideas with those of others and even abandon his/her own wants altogether so that s/he can accommodate the needs of others. Keep in mind however, that compromise involves finding a solution that benefits *everyone*, including him/her.

Refers to the ability to compromise with others in a way that suits all parties.

Likeability (score 54)

According to his/her results, Joan is fairly likeable. While s/he does not go out of his/her way to please others or be overly friendly to everyone who crosses his/her path, s/he is relatively pleasant and welcoming. In other words, while s/he may come off as a little standoffish on occasion, for the most part, s/he is liked and accepted by those around him/her. Clerical workers often act as liaisons between companies and clients; therefore these employees must be very pleasant and possess excellent people skills. It would be to his/her benefit if s/he concerned himself/herself a little more consistently with coming across as approachable and agreeable to others.

Measures how approachable and pleasant a person is.

Desire for Control (score 30)

According to his/her results, Joan enjoys being in control and having the last word or final say when in a group setting. S/he likes having things done his/her way, and sometimes tends to lack appreciation for alternative suggestions. For the most part, s/he seems to desire power and at times may even manipulate others in order to achieve his/her goal.

Refers to the need to dominate in a group setting.

Emotional Strength (score 66)

According to his/her results, Joan is usually emotionally strong. This may give people the impression that s/he is not very affected by what goes on around him/her, but the truth is that s/he generally doesn't experience extreme emotions. This balance is what allows him/her to deal with whatever adversity comes his/her way and helps him/her bounce back from hardship fairly quickly. His/Her behaviors are typically well-controlled and regulated; s/he is not one to act without considering the consequences. His/Her discipline and willpower are admirable.

Assesses level of emotional strength and control.

Helpfulness (score 96)

According to his/her results, Joan scored high in Helpfulness. S/he tends to be very patient with others and cooperative when given a task. People likely turn to him/her when they need support and encouragement because they know they can always rely on him/her when they need a hand. S/he is very concerned with the welfare of others and is always willing to help when the situation calls for it. S/he should keep up the good work, because s/he sets a great example.

Measures interpersonal sensitivity, consensus building and an interest in working with and through others.

Discretion (score 90)

According to Joan's results on the Discretion scale, s/he seems to have no trouble recognizing situations that require his/her discretion. Whether the context is strictly confidential, on a "need-to-know" basis or a simple harmless secret, s/he keeps the information s/he has learned to himself/herself, especially when the matter is delicate. S/he is likely aware of what the laws and ethics of his/her profession deem confidential information. With a juicy piece of information in their hands, many people succumb to the temptation to share it, but this is not the case for him/her. It's a question of realizing what disclosure is inappropriate or unprofessional and controlling the urge to gossip. S/he tries to think about the impact that certain revelations would have on a person's life.

Assesses the ability to respect the privacy of others.

Reaction to Criticism (score 63)

According to his/her score, Joan is rarely defensive in reaction to constructive criticism. S/he almost never interprets the critiques as an assault on his/her character and are fairly certain that the knowledge gained from others' comments will guide him/her in the right direction. S/he realizes that there really isn't a need to defend himself/herself in response to negative feedback, and that being defensive can mean missing out on valuable advice. S/he is also aware that not all criticism is bad and that it is designed to teach rather than torment.

Refers to being open to criticism and learning from it.

Office Skills (score 78)

Joan scored fairly well on the office skills section of the test and therefore, will likely require little additional training in this area. Clerical workers must be able to understand how to use office automation tools as well comprehend basic formulas, calculations and filing methods to complete certain tasks they may be given.

Assesses theoretical and practical knowledge of basic clerical duties.

Arithmetic (score 56)

Joan had an average score on the arithmetic component of the test. Arithmetic is a branch of mathematics that generally deals with the application of the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of numbers. Arithmetic is a valuable skill for both everyday life and for careers requiring computation of any kind, as in the bookkeeping area of the clerical field.

Evaluates the ability to correctly perform basic math calculations.

Filing (score 80)

Joan's performance on the filing exercise was very good. It's easy to misplace a document by putting it in the wrong place but it may not be so easy to find it again. This can be very frustrating especially if the information is important and needed right away. The purpose of filing is to be able to store information in an organized and neat manner, and retrieve it easily and quickly when needed. Even though filing systems may differ from company to company, Joan would likely be able to catch on very quickly.

Reading Comprehension (score 75)

Joan appears to be fairly good at understanding written materials, identifying the most important information and drawing appropriate conclusions based on the facts provided. Given that many of the tasks in the clerical field will require a strong comprehension of the written word, this is a great strength to have.

Assesses the ability to understand and extract relevant information from reading material.

Graph and Chart Reading (score 100)

Joan's responses indicate that s/he is very capable of understanding graphs and charts, and rarely run into difficulty. When working in the clerical field, it is important to be familiar with the structure and components of charts so that s/he can recognize potentially important information.

Evaluates the ability to understand information from charts and graphs.

Proofreading Skills (score 30)

According to Joan's performance on the proofreading exercise, his/her skills in this area need a fair amount of work. Clerical workers often need to verify very important documents in which good grammar and spelling are essential, so it is crucial that Joan strive to improve in this area of his/her skill repertoire.

Assesses ability to accurately edit and proofread documents.

Data Entry Skills (score 76)

Joan's score on the Data Entry component of this test was good. According to his/her results, s/he is generally able to accurately enter information into a database. S/he seems to be fairly familiar with the layout of the computer keyboard and the data and was able to complete this task at a reasonable pace.

Assesses ability to enter information quickly and accurately.

Typing Skills (score 65)

Joan's score on the typing was good but could use a little improvement. Overall however, it appears as though s/he has little difficulty typing with speed and accuracy. These types of tasks are quite common in this field, so it is important that s/he continue to improve.

Assesses ability to type quickly and accurately.

Short-term Memory Skills (score 65)

According to Joan's results on this scale, s/he seems to have little trouble using memorization techniques to successfully store and retrieve information. S/he is also fairly good at processing new

Assesses the ability to

information quickly, allowing him/her to solve problems involving many variables without too much difficulty. The short-term memory acts as a scratch pad for retrieving temporary information, such as names and numbers. His/Her ability to properly encode these in his/her memory means that s/he rarely forgets such information.

store and retrieve information.

Impression Management (score 44)

There was some indication in Joan's results to suggest that s/he was not telling the truth. His/Her elevated score could be a result of being unique in some way (in that some of his/her responses were extremely rare) or s/he was trying to present himself/herself in a favorable light.

Assesses whether test-taker responded in a socially desirable manner.

Acquiescence (score 0)

This scale assesses whether a test-taker was simply agreeing with the test's statements, regardless of whether such attempts were conscious or subconscious. The answers are compared to responses obtained from a large sample of the general population. When someone systematically agrees to responses that are rarely endorsed by others, there is a good reason to believe that she/he is responding carelessly, which may invalidate the whole test.

Assesses whether the test-taker responded to the questions in a careless manner.

According to his/her results, there is no indication that Joan answered the test questions carelessly. This means that s/he took the time to read and respond to each question carefully. Although this does not necessarily ensure the honesty of his/her answers, it does show that s/he took the test seriously.

Strengths & Limitations

The following is a summarized version of this test-taker's results, summarized as Strengths, Potential Strengths, and Limitations.

Strengths

- S/he possesses most of the traits need to work in the clerical field
- S/he has good work habits
- S/he is a purposeful and focused person
- S/he is quite organized
- S/he is able to manage his/her time efficiently and effectively
- S/he is reliable
- S/he is detail-oriented
- S/he completes his/her tasks in a thorough, time effective manner
- S/he has the drive and persistence needed to motive himself/herself and get things done
- S/he is able to concentrate and shut out distractions when necessary
- S/he is able to mobilize the energy s/he needs to accomplish a task
- S/he adjusts very well to changes in his/her environment
- S/he is most comfortable when s/he has an established daily routine
- His/Her interpersonal skills are excellent
- S/he has an excellent grasp of the communication process and is able to read others well
- S/he possesses the skills necessary to resolve conflict in a mature and inoffensive manner
- S/he is willing to meet others halfway when faced with conflicting desires
- S/he goes with the flow and does not desire control
- S/he shows excellent emotional strength
- S/he is very concerned with the welfare of others and is always willing to help when the situation calls for it
- S/he understands and respects the privacy of those around him/her and does not disclose other people's personal information
- S/he deals with constructive criticism in a professional manner
- S/he has good office skills
- S/he has proficient filing skills
- His/Her reading comprehension is excellent
- S/he is able to correctly read and understand charts
- His/Her data entry skills are good
- S/he has proficient typing skills
- His/Her short-term memory skills are quite good

Due to office automation, there have been considerable changes in the skills required for clerical workers.

Potential Strengths

- S/he is somewhat concerned with coming across as pleasant and likeable to others
- S/he is moderately comfortable with numbers and basic mathematical calculations and problems

Limitations

- His/Her proofreading skills are inadequate

Advice

It takes more than just excellent communication and interpersonal skills to work in the clerical field. There are a number of aptitudes Joan will need in order to succeed. Below are some tips to offer him/her on how to improve on the skills s/he will need if s/he wishes to pursue a career as an administrative or clerical worker.

- **Lists, lists, lists.** Being organized can save a lot of time and energy. A good first step is to purchase an agenda or day planner. Fill in any upcoming plans, appointments or meetings, and check everyday to ensure that you keep your commitments. Your planner is also a good place to keep bill payment records, budgeting, and to-do lists. You may be unaccustomed to writing out your life in this manner, but the benefits will become clear in no time.
- **Know what is expected of you.** In order to avoid letting people down, be sure that you understand exactly what is expected of you. You may have been judged as undependable in the past because of simple misunderstandings. However, if you are aware of your commitments and still fail to follow through on them, then you should recognize that you need to respect the wishes of the people to whom you made your promise.
- **Divide your work into small, manageable steps/tasks.** An inability to concentrate is largely psychological, and if you feel overwhelmed with a task you are bound to "shut off" mentally. One way to get around this is to forget the big picture for a while; focus on one specific task at a time. The satisfaction of achieving each component should keep you going.
- **Perception, perception, perception.** Even if you perceive criticism to be downright hurtful and without grounds, there is still a lesson to be learned. Perception is an important element in effective listening, so keep in mind that how you interpret a statement may not even come close to the meaning that was intended. If you are unsure whether you have understood what a critic is telling you, ask questions to clarify - don't jump to conclusions.
- **Be tidy.** In order to get things done efficiently and to manage your time wisely, you must have essential things like your desk, filing cabinet, address book, etc. organized. Clutter makes you waste time and drains your energy. Establish a file system for papers, including bills (arrange time sensitive things by date), clients, tax stuff, etc. Arrange these things by subject, keeping in mind that those papers that need to be readily accessed should be easy to get to. Use obvious nouns for labeling files. To test your logic, see if someone else can find something in your system. Regularly (every few months or so), go through your files to throw things out. You will find valuable stuff that you can use or deal with and you won't end up keeping reams of useless paper.
- **Develop coping skills for difficult situations.** Choose an activity that never fails to relax you and make time for it when you feel stressed out. Identify several people you can count on for either emotional or practical support and don't be shy to call them when necessary. Make a conscious effort to keep your personal and professional lives separate. With a good set of coping skills at your disposal, any stressor can be minimized. Treat stressful or upsetting situations as opportunities to practice your new coping skills.

For more tips on these topics, download the following [PDF file](#).