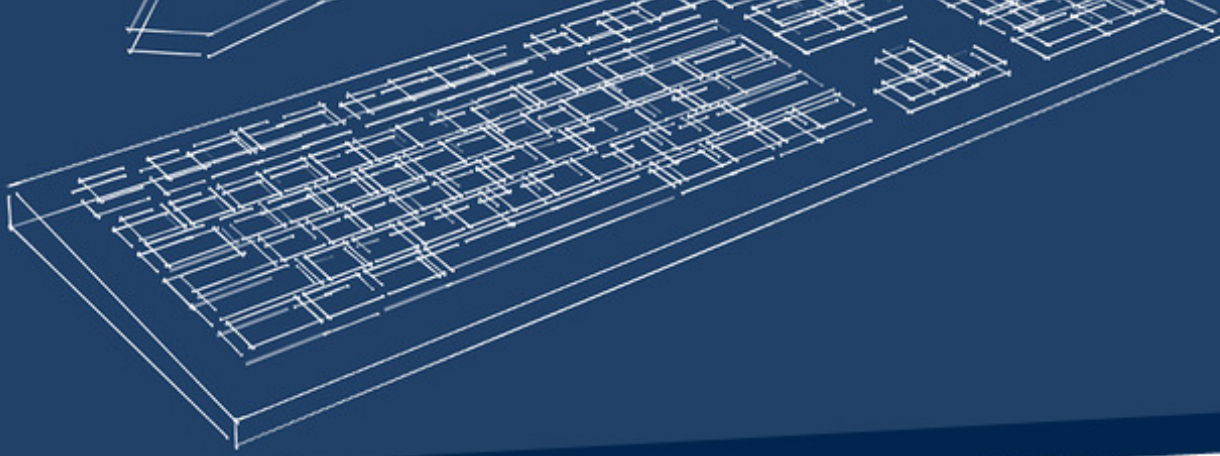


Preparing for Computer Based Tests

A comprehensive guide by Ramesh Kumar B



About the author

Ramesh Kumar B, CTO, Eduquity, has over 26 years of experience in the areas of System Analysis, Design and Project Management. A graduate in Electrical Engineering, Ramesh's earlier assignments included that of Project Manager, Ampersand Software and Manager, EDP, BHEL.

At Eduquity, Ramesh is responsible for all IT related issues.

Ramesh has worked in the Electronics Division of BHEL, Bangalore, as Manager - EDP. As part of the MIS team, he was involved in the design, development and implementation of MRP and MRP II systems. A member of the core team for New Technologies, he underwent SAP training and conducted a detailed feasibility study for implementing SAP.

Ramesh is a recipient of more than 15 productivity awards at BHEL. In his various capacities in the EDP department, he was instrumental in setting up and improving systems & processes from planning to production, including quality.

Ramesh has contributed more than 30 articles on different technologies for various Magazines and has published a book "Engineers Yellow Pages". This book is basically for final-year engineering students and attempts to give them an insight into the various avenues they can explore on completing their course.

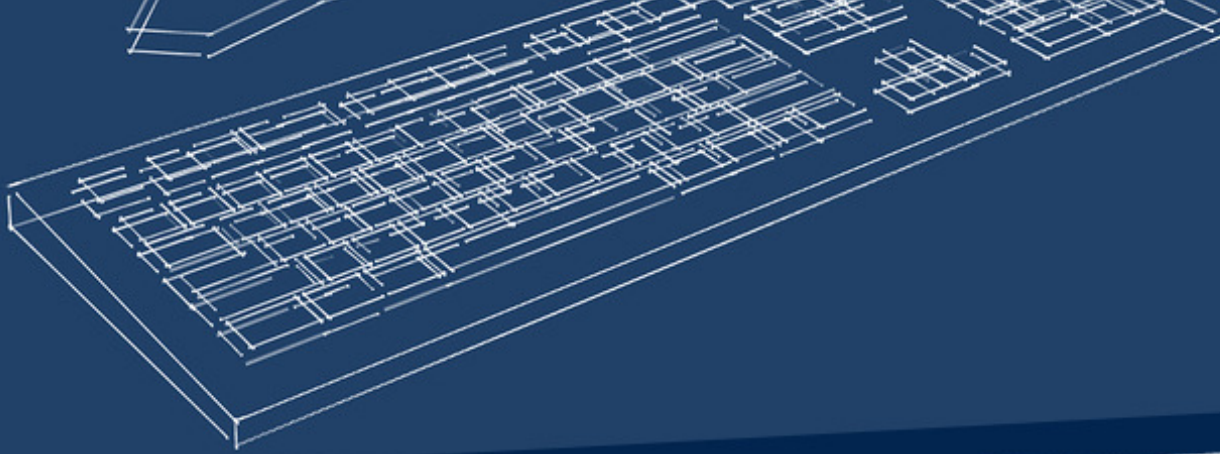
His hobbies include sharing information and exploring new technologies. "Nothing is impossible," he insists, and his goal is to ensure online tests with Zero failure.



Copyright © Ramesh Kumar B

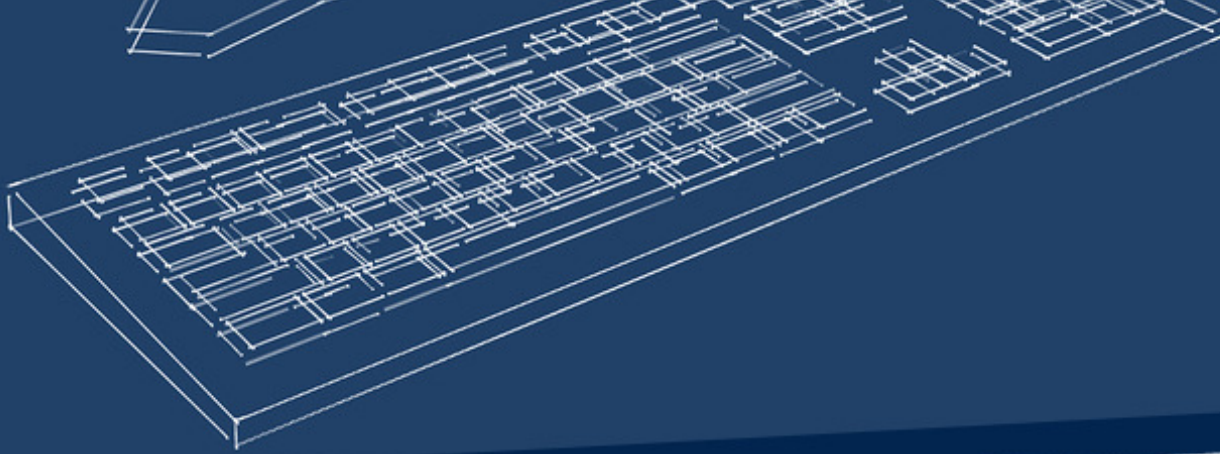
The author thanks Chandrika Ravi and Vijaya Krishna for their assistance in editing this book.

All Rights Reserved.



Contents

Computer Based Exams	pg 4
Advantages of Computer based Testing	pg 4
Components of Exam	pg 4
Online registration form	pg 5
Booking slot	pg 6
Admit card	pg 7
Checklist	pg 7
Practice, Practice & Practice	pg 8
Types of Questions	pg 9
Examples of questions	pg 10
Multiple Choice- Single correct answer	pg 10
Multiple Choice- Multiple correct answers	pg 10
Multiple Choice- True / false	pg 10
Ordering	pg 10
Reaching the center	pg 11
D-Day -The Exam time	pg 12
For special candidates	pg 12
What you should keep in mind	pg 13
Some useful websites	pg 14



Computer Based Exams

Traditional Paper & Pencil tests are being replaced by Computer Based Exams. The designers of Computer Based Exams focus on many issues to make you comfortable. Hence you can expect a computer based test to be easier than you think.

Many are afraid of Computer Based Exams as they may have not used Computers before or are not very comfortable with computers. A Computer Based Exam could be so simple that you only need to use the mouse. If you know how to use a mouse, you will find it very easy to attempt the Computer Based Exam.

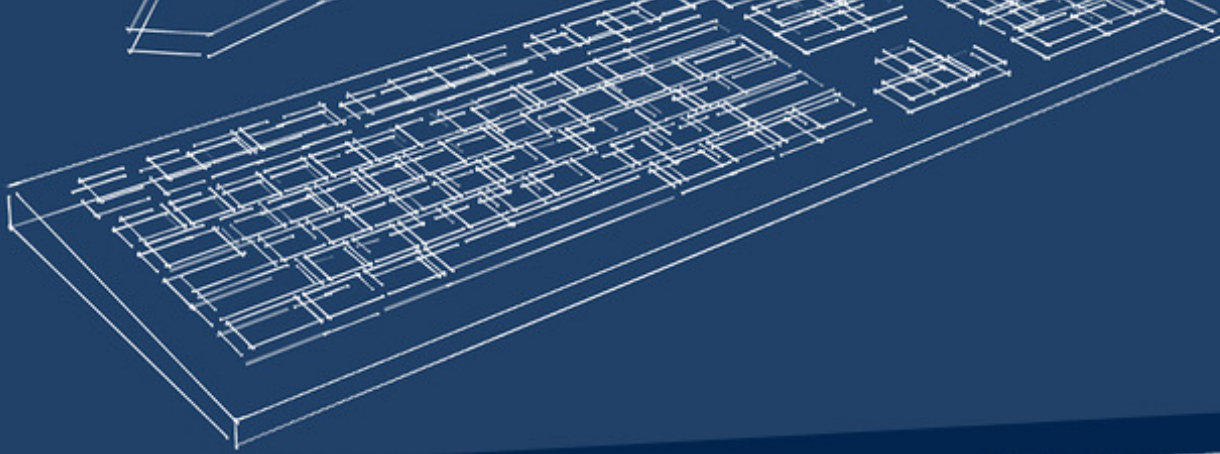
Advantages of Computer based Testing:

Objectivity in Results	Factors such as favoritism, evaluation fatigue, prejudice, 'halo effect' etc are eliminated
Data Management and Accessibility	Considerable savings in resource utilization, time and cost
Better Security through Secure lines	Enhanced authentication- Biometrics and image capture during registration and assessment.
Use of multi-media in developing test questions	In-depth measurement of aptitude, knowledge and skills
Translation, Localization and distribution	Immediate installation in test centers country-wide and/or worldwide
Greater reliability and accuracy	More reliable in terms of authenticity of scoring
Randomization and parameterization	Two adjacent Candidates do not get the questions in the same order or answer options in the same order
Post-test analysis	Principles of psychometrics can help enhance data analysis, test development, revision and feedback
Test Revision	Errors and / or newer versions can be rolled out in minimal time
Return-On-Investment	ROI is definitely better in the medium to long run.
Master control	Control over test across centres through master center and log of every activity

Components of Exam:

1. Registration Form
2. Place / time / slot booking
3. Admit card
4. Exam
5. Result

One or more or all the above may be computerized by the agency. Let us address each one.



Online registration form

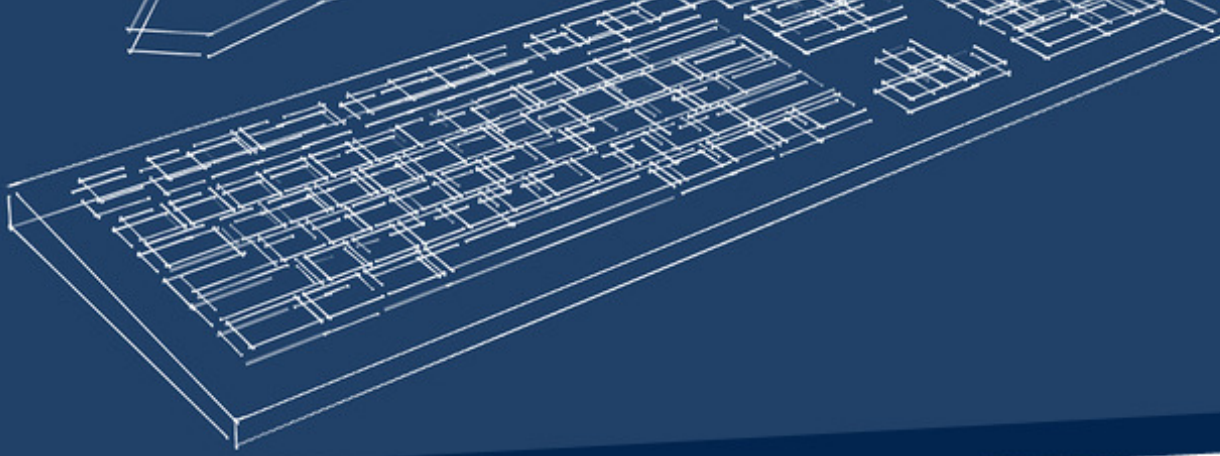
If you are required to fill a registration form online, do not be in a hurry to fill it right away. Go through the details once. Keep the information ready before you start filling in the details. Some registration forms collect less information and some may be very detailed.

A well designed Registration form lets you to fill in details and save before submitting final data. You will also be allowed to preview the data as entered by you. You may 'submit' the data only if you are happy with the data provided by you and are convinced that it is accurate. Once submitted, you will not be able to change the data.

There are some intelligent people who may like to sabotage the system by trying their hacking skills. SQL Injection is the hot favorite, but the designers of the Registration form are no jokers. They also think like crooks and anticipate these kinds of attempts, sabotage, hacking and corruption of the software. They provide all kinds of validations and may even capture your attempts of SQL Injection and the special characters you use in the text fields. They also capture the IP address and Mac Address of the computer. There are cases where candidates are tracked and arrested. Hence, do not venture to play with the system.

If you are required to pay online, check the options provided – Online payment, Demand Draft or payment in Bank. If the payment is done through a payment gateway, your application ref is captured online. However, if you are sending the payment offline, ensure that the same is received by the examination agencies. Else, your application may be deemed invalid, even if you fill it online.

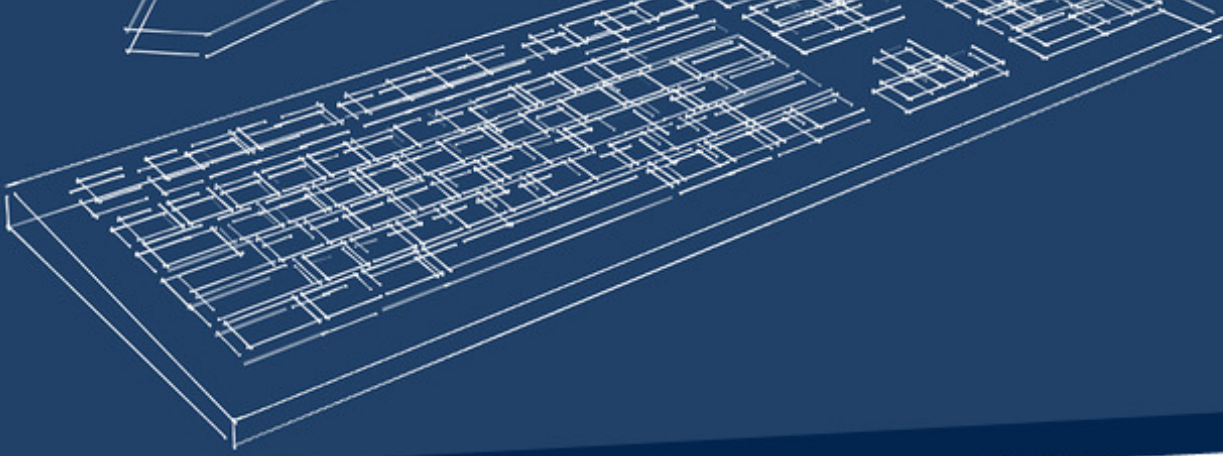
Read the instructions carefully. Sometimes, you are expected to fill the registration form, preview, print and send a hard copy of the same to the concerned, for validating the application form. If this is not done, though you have filled online, your application may be considered incomplete.



Booking slot

Many times the candidates are allowed to book their slot/time, day and center of choice to take up the computer based exam. Generally, the capacity for each center is calculated based on demand. For example, if there are 5000 students who opted to take up exam in center A, the exam authorities may fix the center capacity as 5000. The center may have 250 computers in the computer labs (generally this is not made public). If the test is of 3 hours and there are 2 batches a day, the test may be run in that center for 500 people a day for 10 days.

In this case you have a wide choice of 20 slots (2 slots a day for 10 days). It is generally noticed that slots on holidays are booked faster. Some slots may have less booking if there is any clash of dates with any other exam. Hence, if you are appearing for any other exam during this 10 day period, you need to keep a watch on the slot booking availability and book your slot at the earliest to get the time that is best suited for you.



Admit card

After you book the slot, the admit card is generally made available for you to print the same. In cases where the slots are allocated by the agency, the admit card printing will be enabled by the agency. Print the admit card and check the instructions carefully. Sometimes there may be an instruction sheet that may be required to be printed along with the admit card.

If required to sign the Admit card, check if that is to be done before going to the center or to be signed in the presence of the Invigilator/proctor. Also check the photograph, if an option to upload the photo at the time of registration was available or if you are required to paste a photograph in the admit card in space provided before going to the examination centre.

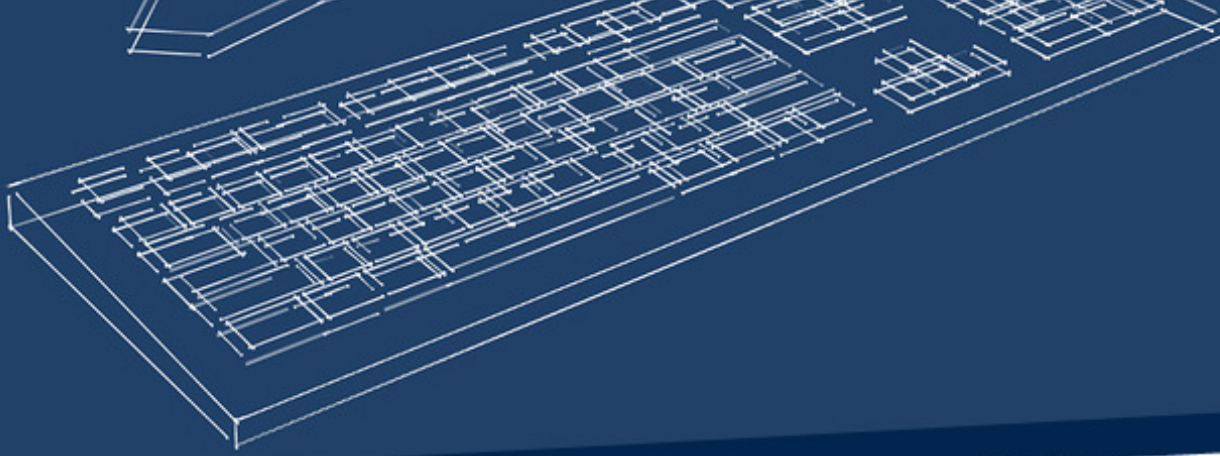
Keep the admit card safely till the exam results are declared or as instructed.

Do not fold the admit card. There may be a bar code or a security code that may get damaged by doing so. Sometimes password is printed on admit card for use during the test. If this is not visible, please take another printout or request the admin staff before the computer based test begins. Else, you will be wasting your time.

You may have to carry your photo ID or some other documents when you appear for the Computer Based Exam. Do not forget to carry them.

Make a checklist to go before exam:

1. Admit card / Hall ticket
2. Photo ID
3. Pen / pencils (and generally you don't need to carry any papers, calculators- unless allowed)
4. Do not carry any original documents such as mark sheets unless asked for.
5. Mobiles will not be allowed inside the exam hall. So ensure that you carry a bag in which you can keep your belongings and leave outside examination hall.



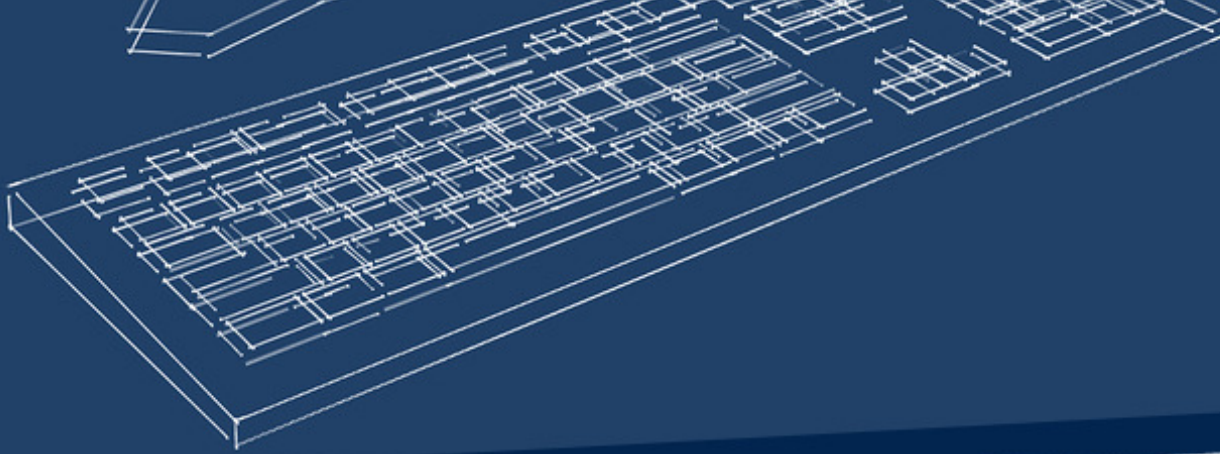
Practice, Practice & Practice

Every Computer Based Examination agency shall provide a sample test either that can be downloaded or taken live on the internet. There may be many more that offer training and online practice tests. Do not ignore the official demo test provided by the official agency, as it would be similar to what you will be facing in the actual Computer Based Exam.

When you are practicing on the demo test, do not focus on the content i.e. the questions and answers. Focus on the layout, question and option location, timer, marking for review, unmarking for review, moving between sections, how the answered questions are represented etc.

If the questions are of multiple choice and only one is a correct answer, there will be a radio button next to each option. By clicking on the radio button with the mouse you can mark your option. If you are not sure, double click on the same radio button again. And the mark is removed. You can also click on another option without deselecting the previous answer.

Some testing agencies may even provide video. You may watch the same for your comfort factor. It is recommended to practice the demo yourself.



Types of Questions

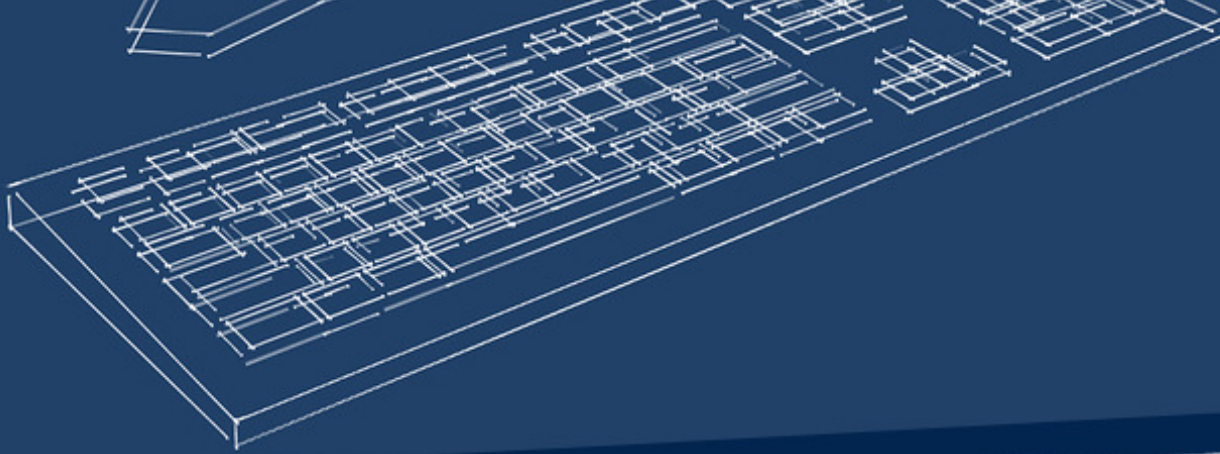
The following question types can be used in a Computer based Exam. Most used are:

- Objective - Multiple Choice- Single correct
- Objective - Multiple Choice- Multiple correct
- Objective - Multiple Choice- True/false
- Objective - Sequence- Ordering
- Objective - Sequence- POP up
- Survey- Dichotomous
- Survey -Rating scale (Likert etc)
- Short Answer
- Hot spot
- Fill in the Blank
- Matching - Point and match
- Matching - Drop down
- Matching - Drag & drop
- Reading comprehension
- Listening comprehension
- Voice Recording and evaluation
- Simulation
- Jigsaw puzzle based
- Typing test – see & type
- Typing Test – Listen & type

The examination agency may use one or more types as deemed fit. If there are questions where you need to calculate and arrive at answer, the traditional multiple choice test would offer four or five options of which one is correct answer and you are required to mark it. Now the trend is changing as Indian Institutes of Technologies, India, adapted a text box approach, where you are not given four or five options, but you are required to calculate and provide answer in the box provided. This eliminates the guess work of the candidates.

A typical training Institute may train you to arrive at deductive logic, if you are not sure of correct answer, where you start eliminating the options that you think are 'not right'. This approach will not help above question type.

Hence, it is all the more important for you to check the demo provided by the testing agency carefully and prepare accordingly.



Examples of questions

Multiple Choice- Single correct answer

In a gathering, I start the conversation first.

- Often
- Sometimes
- Occasionally
- Rarely

Multiple Choice- Multiple correct answers

Which of the following equals 4

- 4+0
- 5-1
- 2X2
- 3+2

Multiple Choice- True / false

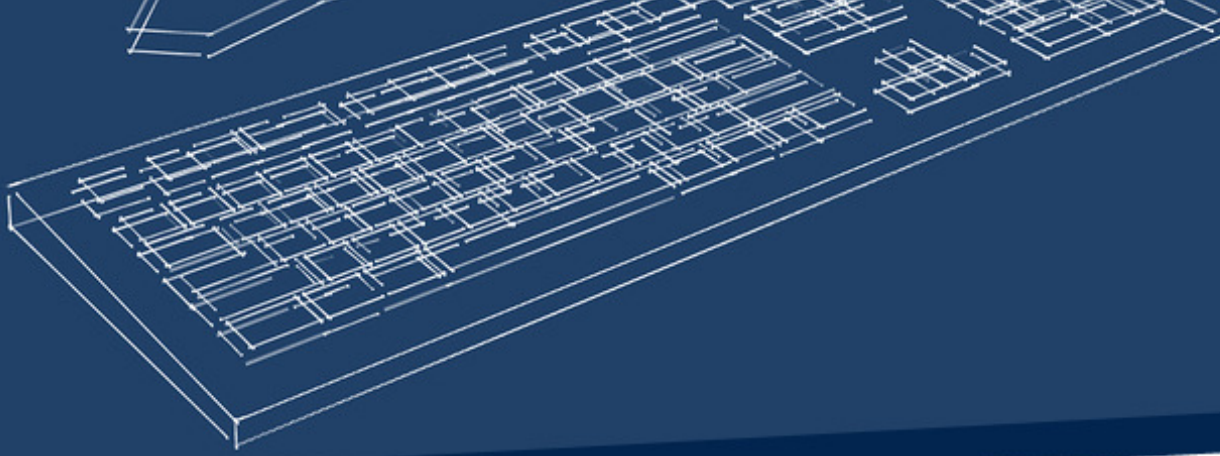
Batteries store energy

- True
- False

Ordering

Sort cities from North to South based on geographical location

- 1 Chennai
- 2 Delhi
- 3 Nagpur
- 4 Hyderabad
- 5 Bangalore

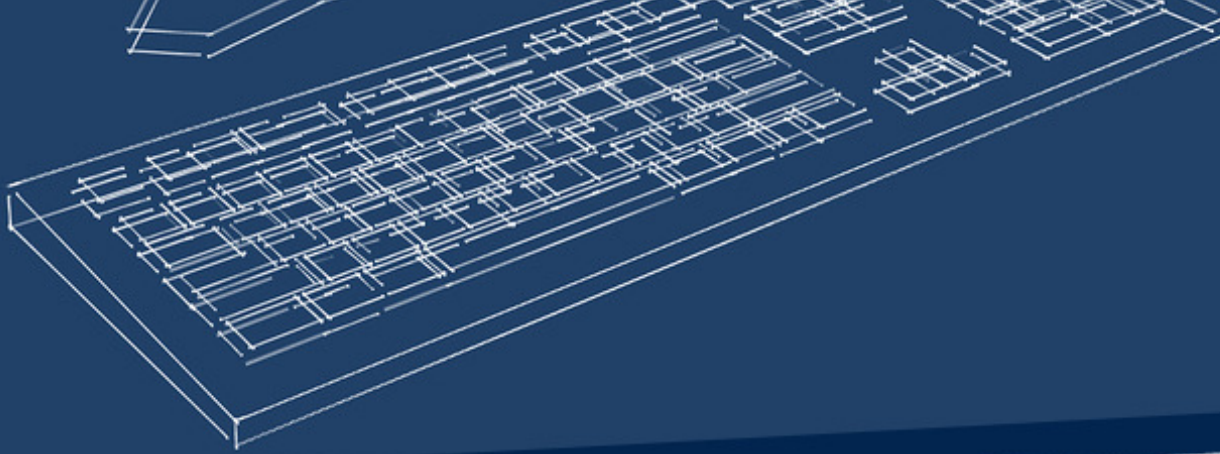


Reaching the center

Check your admit card and find the examination center to be reached. Plan to be there early to avoid any delay. Some agencies allow late comers up to 15 minutes. Some may allow up to 30 minutes. Some may not entertain late coming at all

Some agencies may provide complete duration of the test even if you are late by 15 minutes. If the test is of 120 Minutes and you arrive late by 15 minutes, you may still get the full 120 minutes. Many agencies may allow you late but may allow you only the balance time. If you are late by 15 minutes for a 120 Minute test, you may be given 105 minutes only.

If you know how to reach the place, it is fine. Else, check out at least a day before as to how to reach the center. In case of doubt, look for the phone number/contact details and check out the directions. If you are Internet savvy, it may be fine to look out Google maps, but sometimes the location may not be correctly mapped. If the location has been shifted from old premises to new premises, you may get to see older markings. Hence, be careful and check the address on the admit card and the location on Google Map are the same. Do not follow without getting the confirmation that both the addresses are the same. If the addresses are same, it may help you following GPRS/GIS.



D-Day -The Exam time

At the Examination center, you will be asked to produce the admit card and the photo ID (and any other documents as required and indicated in the instruction sheet). You may need to sign some attendance sheet. Now it is very common to take a picture of yours using a digital camera/webcam and capture your finger print at the examination centre before you enter the exam hall.

You will be authenticated and allotted a computer in a lab. You will be directed to that computer. You may occupy the seat and wait for the instructions. Once all candidates take their seats, a center manager gives instructions.

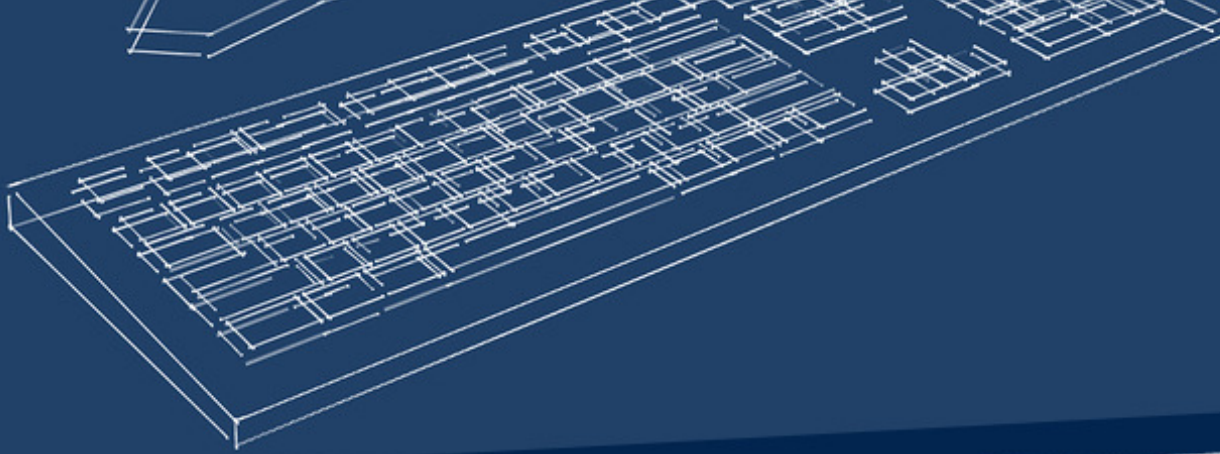
If the system requires a password to be entered into the system, you may do so. Typically at the scheduled time, the administrator starts the test. Once the test starts, the timer may too start. The test closes automatically when the time lapses.

The test is generally designed as to not let you access any other applications. Do not try to find a way to get out of the screen and explore. The proctors / invigilators will be watching you and may disqualify you from taking the test by declaring your attempt as sabotage. Yes. They are authorized. Do not bother to argue.

If there is a problem, do not panic. Raise your hand and soon a proctor / invigilator will attend to you. If there is a genuine problem, they may attend to that immediately. If it is a minor problem, it may be sorted out and you may continue on the same computer. If the computer is faulty, you will be assigned a different computer. A well designed Computer Based Exam will record all your responses and stores securely every time you answer. Time too is captured. In case of reassignment of a new computer, you will be starting from where you stopped and you will get the balance time. You can be sure that you have not lost any time.

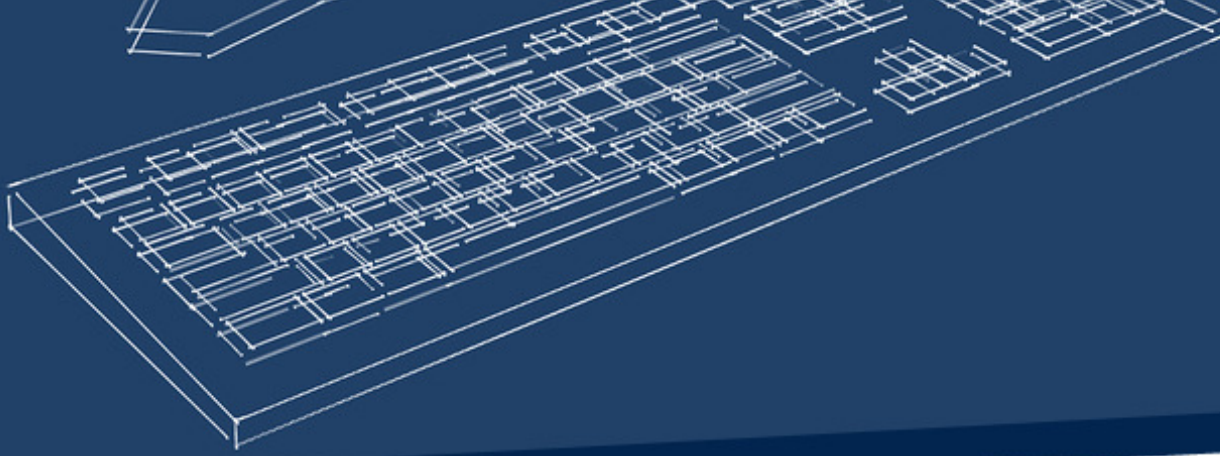
If you are a special candidate:

If you are special candidate and are differently-abled, inform the computer based exam agency well in advance and ensure that they respond. Specify your requirement clearly. If you need a scribe, check with the authorities if they provide the scribe or you need to take one along. If you need special software like JAWS, let the examination agency know about it.



What you should keep in mind

1. Do not try to sabotage the hardware / software. You are required to use your skill in the subject of the exam and not your skills of using computers.
2. Answer what you know.
3. If there is no negative marking, take chances and answer what you think 'may be right'.
4. If there is negative marking, gamble only if you want to and keep that to minimum.
5. Use 'Mark for review' option in case you have a doubt. This is only for your reference to visit the same question at a later time for reviewing the answer option if you are left with some extra time.
6. Mark for review, un-mark for review will not have bearing on your scores.
7. If you do not know the 'right' option, try deductive logic of eliminating the 'wrong' options.
8. If there is a 'Finish the test', 'close the test'. 'Quit' button, do not try unless you have nothing else to do. Generally, one or two warnings are given once you click on such buttons. If you confirm, the test will be closed and you cannot go back to take the test.
9. All questions and options may be randomized and do not try look into the neighbor's screen. Proctors may note down your and your neighbor's admit card details silently. If your answer options and the neighbor's answer options match 100%, both may be considered to have been involved in malpractice.
10. You may be given a booklet / papers for your rough work. Use only that for working.
11. Keep an eye on the timer and plan well as to how you want to answer.
12. Be calm and review the answers if you have time.



Some useful websites

Pearson Vue's Computer-Based Testing Tutorial <http://www.pearsonvue.com/sponsors/tutorial/>

University of Cambridge <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/computer-based-practice.html>

Prepare for the GRE® General Test <http://www.ets.org/gre/general/prepare>

Aptitude tests <http://www.indiabix.com/online-test/aptitude-test/>

BITSAT practice tests from Jumbo Tests <http://bitsat.jumbotests.com/>

Online C Programming Tests <http://www.indiabix.com/online-test/c-programming-test/>

GRE- Chemistry practice tests <http://www.studentsguide.in/chemistry-online-test/index.html>