In order to have a valid assessment technique, it needs to have the following characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standardized</th>
<th>The administration of a test to a large, representative sample of people under uniform conditions for the purposes of establishing performance norms.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The sample of people used for standardization, should be like those the test is designed for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>The ability of a test to produce consistent results when repeatedly administered under similar conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you are given an IQ test, then you should get a similar score if you take it 3 months from now, or even 1 year from now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>The ability of a test to measure what it is intended to measure. If it is designed to measure intelligence, it measures intelligence and not cultural knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If a test is designed to measure honesty, it should measure honesty, and not social desirability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These principles applies to tests of intelligence, SAT’s, personality tests, honesty test, multimeters, speedometers, etc.
**Personality Assessment Techniques**

- Projective Tests (eg. Rorschach inkblot tests)
- Self-Report Inventories

Any psychological tests is useful in that it achieves two basic goals

1. It accurately (validity) and consistently (reliability) reflects a person’s characteristics on some dimension
2. It predicts a person’s future psychological functioning or behavior
Personality Assessment

• Projective Tests: A type of personality test that involves a person interpreting an ambiguous image; used to assess unconscious motives, conflicts, psychological defenses, and personality traits.

Example: Rorschach Inkblot Test

![An Inkblot Similar to One Used for the Rorschach Inkblot Method](image)

• Self-report inventories: A type of psychological test in which a person’s response to standardized questions are compared to established norms.

Examples: MMPI, CPI, 16PF, Just World Belief Scale, Optimism-Pessimism Scale
Pseudoscientific Strategies for Assessing Personality

A pseudoscience is a fake or false science (see chapter 1 for a definition of pseudoscience and science) that makes claims based on little or no evidence. Examples of the pseudoscience of personality are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• Phrenology: Determining personality characteristics from the shape of the skull. (see Chapter 2: Neuroscience and Behavior, page 64)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Phrenology illustration" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Horoscopes/astrology: Determining personality characteristics from your birthday. (see Chapter 11: Personality, page 496)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Graphology: Determining personality characteristics from your handwriting. (see Chapter 11: Personality, page 498)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphology illustration" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions we should be asking:
  • What is the scientific evidence?
  • Are these methods of assessment of personality reliable and valid?
  • If there is little scientific evidence to support them, why do these pseudosciences persist?

What do we do when we have very little knowledge about how to assess these questions?
Strengths and Weaknesses of Each Method of Personality Assessment

Projective tests strengths:
• Provides a wealth of qualitative information that can be followed up if used for psychotherapy

Projective test weaknesses:
• The testing situation and examiner’s behavior affects the response
• The scoring on the test is subjective and inconsistent among scorers
• Test-retest inconsistencies are common
• Poor predictors of future behavior.

Self-report inventory strengths:
• Objectively scored and compared to standardized norms collected on large groups of people (they receive the same instructions).
• Validity of self-report inventories is greater than projective tests.

Self-report inventories weaknesses
• People are able to fake socially desirable responses
• Some people are prone to pick “the first answer”
• Some personality inventories are long and tedious which lends to the problem listed above.
• People are not always accurate in assessing their own behavior, attitudes or attributes. Some people deny their own feelings
• People do change over time.
Phrenology

Intuitively, people with larger foreheads have larger brains, and therefore, are more intelligent (this also suggested that men were inherently smarter than women). The exterior of the head must reveal something about the shape of the brain.

- Bumps on different regions indicate different personality traits.
- Due to phrenology, it was difficult for scientists to study the anatomy of the brain. Why study the structure of the brain, when the surface of the skull will tell you the same thing?
- What was the evidence?
- If phrenology is valid, what predictions should it make?
- If phrenology is a pseudoscience, why do people accept it?
Phrenology is a pseudoscience (a fake or false science that makes claims based on little or no evidence), which claims that personality traits are revealed by the shape of the skull. Like any pseudoscience, you should ask the following questions:

• What is the claim?
• What is the evidence for the claim?
• What psychological thinking processes affect your interpretation of that evidence?
Graphology

A century ago, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle popularized the use of handwriting analysis (graphology) by writing stories in which Sherlock Holmes used it to solve crimes, and is the forefather to projective tests such as the Rorschach Test and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

Graphology claims that personality traits are revealed by handwriting, such as the size, shape and slant of letters*. Based on such claims, some companies use graphologists to select job candidates. This false system has been used to determine who gets hired, who is selected for a jury, or who is given bank credit. What critical questions should you ask about graphology?

• How accurate are graphologists are at predicting personality traits? What is the evidence?
• How do graphologists compare to chance, or untrained observers?
• Does their analysis distinguish individuals?

When graphology has been assessed, what are the findings?

• Graphologists score close to zero on test of accuracy in personality rating.
• When performing a test-retest reliability (asking the graphologist to reassess their answer without seeing their previous answer), the retest answers rarely matched the original ones.
Graphologists do slightly better than untrained college students in ratings of personality and job performance.

*graphology is not the same as using handwriting analysis to detect forgeries

Based on the accuracy of each category on page 467, how many correct identifications (both types) and incorrect identifications (both types) are made?

Assessing a graphologist: Is the person a good or bad secretary?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you ready?</th>
<th>Is the person actually a good or bad secretary*</th>
<th>Were you correct?</th>
<th>Your Response</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Correct (hit)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Wrong (miss)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Wrong (false +)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* you can replace the choice with entrepreneur/librarian, actor monk

Assessing a graphologist: Is the person a good or bad secretary?
Person is actually a good secretary | Person is actually a bad secretary
---|---
Graphologist says they are a good secretary | Correct (hit) | Wrong (false positive)
Graphologist says they are a bad secretary | Wrong (miss) | Correct (hit)

### Success Rats by Type of Assessor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Assessed</th>
<th>Graphologists</th>
<th>Untrained Assessors</th>
<th>Psychologists (typed transcripts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good/bad secretaries</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs/librarians</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors/monk</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Success rate</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graphological interpretations*

1. Level of emotional responsiveness

- Withdrawal
- Objectiveness
- Intensity

The backward slant at left indicates withdrawal, the vertical slant in the middle indicates objectiveness, and the forward slant on the right indicates intensity.

2. Social responsiveness

- Repression
- Lack of inhibition

Note the tight loops of the m and n on the left, which indicate repression, and the spread loops of the m and n on the right, which indicate a lack of inhibition.

3. Approach to achievement

- Lack of self-confidence
- Strong willpower

Note the low t-bar on the left, which indicates a lack of self-confidence, and the high t-bar on the right, which indicates strong willpower.

*(Figure 10.A) from Psychology, brief edition, 2000 by John Santrock
Personal validation

The process of validating or assessing the accuracy of an ambiguous or general statement (usually about that individual's personality) with his or her own personal experience with the belief that the statement is making reference to that personal experience. When multiple people read that same statement, they think of different personal experiences to validate the claim with their own personal experiences.
To help understand the process of personal validation, read the following personality sketch.

You have a strong need for other people to like you and for them to admire you. At times you are extroverted, affable, and sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary, and reserved. You have a great deal of unused energy which you have not turned to your advantage. While you have some personality weaknesses, you are generally able to compensate for them. You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations. You pride yourself on being an independent thinker and do not accept other opinions without satisfactory proof. You have a tendency to be critical of yourself. Some of your aspirations tend to be unrealistic.

After receiving an individual copy of this personality description, 39 students rated on a scale of 0 (poor) to 5 (perfect) the degree to which the personality sketch described their personality. The following results were obtained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Perfect match</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Poor match</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most students said this personality sketch was essentially a good description of their personality. How is this possible if everyone is reading the same description, yet everyone is different?

People are reading a general statement and recalling how that personally relates to them. They think of an example in their life that confirms that statement. The truthfulness or accuracy of the statements resides in the subjective interpretation of the statements, not in ability of the writer to make accurate predictions. Although this demonstration was done in 1948, similar results have been found recently. What people fail recognize is the following:

(1) In such multi-faceted descriptions, there is bound to be some overlap with ones own characteristics.

(2) The statements that fit the best are so general that they are bound to ring true—one size fits all.

(3) The statements are desirable to possess.

How much acceptance would astrology receive if a sign read like this?

**Virgo:** You are the logical type and hate disorder. Your nitpicking unbearable to your friends. You are cold, unemotional, and usually asleep while making love. Virgos make good doorstops.