

WHAT MAKES A "GOOD" TEST?

The Basics of Psychometrics for Normative-Based Tests

How can you be sure the test you're using with clients is "good?" There's a science for that. Psychometrics is a field that uses rigorous methods to measure characteristics like personality, attitude, and values.

Here are a few ways you can know if your test is psychometrically-sound...or "good!"



1

A CLEAR PURPOSE

A well-designed test has a specific purpose for its use. Some tests are designed for helping determine ideal careers, others for hiring leaders. The purpose of the test should align with how it's being used.



2

BACKED BY THEORY OR RESEARCH

The characteristics that are being measured should have some type of research backing up why they are being measured. It helps if this research is based on some kind of model or theory (for example, the Big 5 model of personality).



3

RELIABLE

A test is reliable if each time the client takes the test, the results do not change much. Think about a reliable test as hitting the same mark: clients' scores on a test on a Wednesday shouldn't change much if they take it again on Friday.



4

VALID

Validity refers to whether the test measures what it says it measures. If the test says it measures risk tolerance, but really measures attitudes about the markets, the test isn't valid. Validity is demonstrated through multiple statistical analyses.



5

"FACE VALID"

Let's say you want to assess client values, but the test you've chosen asks clients about how they feel about your firm and advice. In this case, it appears this test isn't doing what it's supposed to do, or, that it lacks "face validity."



6

DATA SIMILAR TO YOU

In a normative test, your scores will be compared with scores from other test takers to provide you a percentile score - a score that shows how you stack up. It's critical that the comparison group is similar to you.

For more information on psychometrics and good test design, check out the following:

American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education. (2004). *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. Washington, DC: Author.