Observation

U.S. organizations spend billions of dollars each year on employee training. Observation skills play an important role in the success of workplace training and are critical to job performance and learning. Paying attention to instructions, demonstrations, and noticing details are critical components of successful training, quality control, and safety in the workplace.

The WorkKeys Observation test measures the skill people use when they pay attention to and remember work-related instructions, demonstrations, and procedures. There may be distractions or other information competing for the individual's attention.

The scenarios and items in the Observation test are based on the actual demands of the workplace, and selections take the form of video presentations of individuals in various workplace settings. When presented with increasingly complex situations, examinees are asked to pay careful attention to steps to be followed in a process, to safety procedures, and to quality control standards. Factors influencing the complexity of an observation task include how many variables the task involves, how strongly the examinee is directed to pay attention to certain details, and how many distractions (e.g., extraneous details) are present and how strong these distractions are.

Level 3 Observation

Sample Item

Scenario:

It is Leslie's first day as part of the wait staff at the popular Town Diner restaurant. Akira is showing Leslie what he will need to watch for during the lunch rush. As Akira and Leslie move through the section assigned to Leslie, the camera follows them and zooms in to focus on the object of the discussion.

Akira points out to Leslie that the following items must be on each table and that each container should be at least half full: ketchup, special sauce, salt, pepper, and napkins. If any of these supplies begin to run low, Leslie will need to bring a replacement container from the storeroom.

Akira explains that tables need to be cleared as quickly as possible after customers leave so that waiting customers can be seated as promptly as possible.

[Brief video clip of clean table with condiments and napkins on it. Ketchup bottle is 3/4 full, special sauce is full to the top, napkin holder is full, and pepper is 3/4 full.]

What should Leslie do next?

A. Wash the table in preparation for the next customer
B. Replace the ketchup bottle
C. Replace the napkin holder
D. Add a salt shaker
Why this is a Level 3 item:

- The demonstrated task involves only a few simple components.
- Attention is strongly directed to the important details; the camera focuses on the components as they are being described.
- No distracting information is presented.
- Instructions are clear and straightforward.

Level 4 Observation

Sample Item

Scenario:

A narrator explains that quality control is an important part of Marcia's job as an operator at the A-1 Plastics Plant. The plant produces molded buckets for use by a variety of businesses and industries.

Marcia picks up a bucket that has just dropped out of the mold and begins to explain what she looks at on each bucket. The camera zooms in and focuses on the parts of the bucket as Marcia goes through the inspection process.

Marcia first inspects the bucket's upper edge. She runs her hand around the top of the bucket to be sure the rim is there, and that it is of consistent size. She looks at the ears on the handle holes to make sure that they are complete.

Next Marcia checks the sprue, the small bump in the center bottom of the bucket, by holding the bucket up to the light. The sprue should be firm (not droopy), and thick enough that no light passes through it. Marcia is careful not to touch the sprue because it might still be hot enough to burn her hand.

Marcia checks the surfaces of the bucket, looking for bubbles and dark spots. Then she compares the bucket against a color sample to be sure it matches.

Because the bucket has passed inspection, Marcia inserts the handle while the bucket is still warm. She is now ready to look at the next bucket.

[Brief video clip of a bucket with a complete rim, one lopsided ear, and smooth, unblemished surfaces. The bucket is rotated slowly so that the rim, ears, and sides can be clearly seen.]

What, if anything, is wrong with this bucket?

A. The rim is missing.
B. Dark spots are on the sides.
C. A handle ear is lopsided.
D. Nothing. The bucket is ready for the next step in the inspection process.

Why this is a Level 4 item:

- The demonstrated task includes more than one component.
• Attention is directed to the important details of the inspection through the camera’s close-up shots, although the camera does not dwell for long on any one segment.
• Few extra details are presented.
• Very little distracting information is presented.
• The process is straightforward and clearly explained.

Level 5 Observation

Sample Item

Scenario:

The narrator explains the importance of keeping the Garden Center’s outdoor display looking fresh and well stocked and of ensuring that products are easily accessible to customers. The audience is directed to watch as Marietta, the yard supervisor, begins her duties.

The camera follows Marietta, at a distance and without any close-ups or comment, as she quickly moves through the outdoor display area, correcting problems. Viewers watch Marietta

• pick up an empty tray lying in the aisle;
• remove a carton of plants with yellowed leaves and put it in a waste box;
• move a misplaced plant to the proper shelf area;
• snip dried flowers from a blooming plant;
• roll out an awning above a shelf of plants that are in full sun;
• spray water on a group of plants that appear slightly wilted;
• align bales of straw into straight, chest-high stacks;
• rearrange bags of peat moss so that no stack is above chest-high.

As she finishes rearranging the bags of peat moss, a customer walks up and asks Marietta where to find a product that is located inside the store. The picture fades out as Marietta walks into the store with the customer.

The picture fades back in as Marietta walks out of the building, pushing a wheelbarrow that contains plants of various types and four bags of shredded bark. The scene ends as she begins placing the plants on the proper shelves, which have large bare spots. The stack of shredded bark in the background contains two bags of bark.

[Brief video clip of a stocked shelf that is in full sun; there is no awning rolled up above it. There are plants on the ground under the shelf and next to the fence in the background. The plants on the shelf are blooming plants with leaves that are not droopy or wilted and the plants are the same type but vary some in size; one carton of plants has several dried flowers on it. There aren’t many bare spots on the shelf. The water sprayer is lying nearby. There is a stack of baled straw in the background that is chest-high to the customer standing near it.]

What should the yard supervisor do to improve this display area?

A. Water the plants on the shelf
B. Unroll the awning to protect the plants from the sun
C. Clip off the dried flowers
D. Move the plant that belongs in another area
Why this is a Level 5 item:

- The demonstrated task includes several components, requiring close attention to detail.
- The camera subtly directs attention to the important features and details.
- Some extra details and distracting information are present.
- A number of features and details are presented simultaneously.

Level 6 Observation

Sample Item

Scenario:

Ms. Hendrix has just asked Gordana to help Lee produce graphs and other drawings for the presentation that Ms. Hendrix will be giving to the regional managers next week. Although Lee is proficient at word processing and spreadsheet management, he is not familiar with the company’s drawing program. The audience is directed to watch as Gordana demonstrates how to start drawing a bar graph.

The camera focuses clearly on the computer screen, but does not zoom in on any of the actions or icons displayed on the screen as Gordana demonstrates and explains how to:

- open the drawing program;
- set the paper size and configuration (i.e., portrait or landscape) so that it is the same as the sketch;
- click and drag guidelines to ensure the edges will be perfectly straight and properly aligned, and set the program so the drawings will align with the guidelines;
- click on the box drawing tool, place one corner, and then drag the opposite corner until the graph's bar is the desired size;
- fill the bar just created with a 30% shade of gray, then make the outline thicker;
- set up extra guidelines so the bars will be the same width;
- choose the text tool to type labels, then modify the type font and type size, and make the letters bold so they will appear dark and easy to read.

As she prepares to turn the work over to Lee, Gordana reminds him to save his drawing often so it won't be lost in the event of a power outage. She then instructs Lee to complete the drawing and asks him to call her when he has a draft copy printed. The camera fades as Lee takes the mouse and begins to work.

The scene fades back in to show Lee and Gordana comparing the draft drawing with the sketch. Gordana suggests that Lee make the print size even larger across the top and darken one set of bars to 50% gray instead of 30% to provide more contrast. The scene ends as Lee sits down and clicks the mouse to retrieve the file.

[Brief video clip of the computer screen with a vertical (portrait) blank page and a sketch drawn on paper configured horizontally (landscape).]

What, if anything, should Lee do to make the printed page layout match the sketch layout?

A. Click the mouse on file, then on page set-up, then on landscape.
B. Click the mouse on the corner of the page and drag it into the correct position.
C. Select the box drawing tool, and then draw a horizontal page outline.
D. Nothing. The two pages are set up in the same way.

Why this is a Level 6 item:

• The demonstrated task has many components and requires close attention to detail.
• Viewers must watch the movements on the screen carefully, as the camera and the dialog highlight the action only in a very general way.
• Many details are shown on the screen, but only some of them are discussed or used.
• Extra details and distracting information are presented.