

Introduction

The existing system of Selection of officers for the Indian Armed Forces through the Service Selection Board was introduced way back in 1940. It was during the period of the Second World War and was necessitated by the fact that Emergency Commission was offered to the Indians. The main objective of the Selection Board is to select suitable candidates who possess the qualities associated with an officer and who would be able to perform their duties efficiently both in time of war and peace. The basic idea is to choose the right person for the right job. Hence the methods adopted by the Service Selection Board are based on modern techniques and scientific study. The credit for the evolution of these tests goes to experienced psychologists and their reliability has been proved over a long period of time.

Permanent Selection Boards have been established at Bangalore in the South, Allahabad in the East, and at Bhopal in Central India. Similar boards have also been established for recruitment to the Air Force at Dehradun, Mysore and Varanasi.

COMPOSITION OF SERVICE SELECTION BOARDS

Each Service Selection Board consists of three teams, namely,

- 1. The Interviewing Officers:** who comprise the President and the Deputy President and the Interviewing Officers.
- 2. The Group Testing Officers:** who are popularly known as GTO's. Each Board consists of four GTO's.
- 3. The Psychologists:** who are four on each board. One of them sets the written paper but the answer books are assessed by all of them to expedite the work.

A Service Selection Board has the following panel of members:

1. **The President:** who is usually a Colonel or a Captain of I.N. Air Commodore/Group Captain.
2. **The Deputy President:** who is a Lieutenant Colonel or a Commander of I.N. and Group Captain/Wing Commander of Air Force.
3. **The senior GTO:** who is a Major or Lt. Commander of I.N. Wing Commander in Air Force. There are three GTO's who are all Majors. Lt. Cols./Wing Commanders.
4. **The senior psychologist or technical officer:** who is a Major equivalent.
5. **Three assistant psychologists:** who are Military or Civilian Officers. Thus the total Service Selection Board consists of about ten to fifteen examiners.

THE PROCEDURE IN BRIEF

1. **Welcoming the Candidates:** The candidates are received by a representative of the SSB at the railway station. They are accommodated in the Board Area. Their boarding and lodging is free during the duration of the selection process. The period of stay for testing and selection is generally five to six days.
2. **Formation of Groups:** The candidates are divided into groups of eight each on the day of their arrival. They are issued chest numbers. They have to wear these chest numbers during the period of testing and selection. After the distribution of chest numbers, the candidates are given forms to fill in their personal particulars. This form is known as the Board Questionnaire or Personal Information Questionnaire (PIQ).
3. **The Questionnaire:** The Questionnaire provided by the S.S.B. requires the following details.
 - (i) Name of the candidate (in Block Letters)
 - (ii) Batch Number.
 - (iii) Chest Number.
 - (iv) Father's Name.

- (v) Home Town with Population, District and State.
- (vi) Mother Tongue.
- (vii) Date of Birth and Age.
- (viii) Religion.
- (ix) Is your father alive?
- (x) If so, what is his education, occupation, and average monthly income?
- (xi) Is your mother alive?
- (xii) If so, what is her age and education?
- (xiii) Details of other members of the family—brothers and sisters, their ages, educational qualifications and occupation, if any.
- (xiv) Highest Examination Passed:
 - (a) Academic with division, University or Board, and the year of passing.
 - (b) Professional qualification, if any, with details as in (a) above.
- (xv) Details of Academic Career:
 - (a) Name of the Institution.
 - (b) Boarder or day scholar.
 - (c) Examination passed with division.
 - (d) Year of passing.
 - (e) Board or University.
 - (f) Medium of Instruction.
 - (g) Any outstanding achievement(s).
- (xvi) Names of places where you have stayed for more than three years.
- (xvii) Names of newspapers and magazines you read.
- (xviii) Names of books read, besides text books, mentioning whether you are interested in reading short story books, literature, drama, fiction, poetry, biography, history or science.
- (xix) Games and sports played during the last three years with positions held if any and any outstanding achievements.
- (xx) NCC and allied military training received with details.
- (xxi) Co-curricular activities during the last three years.
- (xxii) Hobbies or leisure-time activities.
- (xxiii) Details of any job undertaken and present occupation, if any.

(xxiv) State of physical health. Have you suffered from any serious disease lately? If so, give details.

(xxv) Choice of wing of service in order of preference.

(xxvi) Details of near relatives in the Armed Forces.

1. Broadly speaking, the S.S.B. interview and tests can be divided into three parts

(a) Intelligence and Psychological Test.

(b) Group Testing Officer's Indoor and Outdoor Tests.

(c) Personal Interview.

2. General Character of Tests

The method of selection adopted by the Service Selection Boards is a definite improvement over the traditional method of testing by written examination and oral interview. Some of the tests are individual in character while others are group tests meant to test a candidate's performance in a group. These tests are both indoor and outdoor. Indoor tests comprise speech-making, group discussions and military planning. Intelligence tests are indoor tests. Group obstacles, group tasks and individual obstacles all are obviously outdoor tests. These tests are so designed as to find out the suitability of candidates from different angles for the officer ranks of the Indian Armed Forces:

Candidates ought not to become nervous while appearing for these. A youngman possessing average intelligence and physique, human virtues and weaknesses, and having a healthy outlook, and a keen desire to serve the country and make the full use of facilities of training has a fair chance of selection by the S.S.B. and prove a successful Officer of the Indian Armed Forces. A candidate should face the Board with confidence and exhibit his qualities as best as he can.

3. Three Way Testing

Each candidate is given three different kinds of tests. In other words, each candidate is judged from three different angles by three different officers, each of whom assesses the same quality of the candidate from his individual point of view namely, his suitability for a commission in the Armed Forces. Each of the three officers administers his own tests as detailed below:

(i) *The Psychological test include:*

(a) Intelligence tests viz.:

(1) The verbal tests;

(2) The non-verbal (figure) tests.

(b) Psychological tests that assess the personality of the candidate include:

- (1) Word Association Test (WAT).
- (2) Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) or Picture-Story Test.

(c) Situation Reaction Test (SRT).

(d) Self-Description.

(ii) *The Group Testing Officers (GTO's) Test include:*

- (a) Indoor tests:
 - (1) Group Discussion.
 - (2) Lecturing or speech-making.
 - (3) Military Planning.
- (b) Outdoor tests:
 - (1) Group Tasks and Command Tasks.
 - (2) Individual Obstacles.

(iii) *Interview by the President / Deputy President Interviewing Officers.*

4. Types of Tests

Broadly speaking there are two types of tests:

- (a) Individual tests.
- (b) Group tests.

- (a) Individual tests are those which judge the capability of a candidate in his individual capacity. Intelligence tests, Psychological tests - Word Association and Picture - Story tests, Individual obstacles, Speech-making, and Interview are all individual tests.
- (b) Group tests are meant to judge the group behaviour of a candidate as to how he behaves in a group, how he mixes with others and gets on with juniors, equals and superiors, whether he co-operates with other members of a team whether he is sympathetic towards his juniors and whether he will be able to win the cooperation of his men and able to lead them.

Example of group tests are:

- (1) Group Discussion.
- (2) Group and Command Tasks.
- (3) Group Planning Exercise.

In Group Discussions, in addition to the test of a candidate's power of speech, his capacity to argue in a dispassionate manner, to listen to arguments of other members of a group and to analyse

and find solution of a problem are judged. In group planning and group tasks or obstacles, candidates discuss with other members of the group and arrive at a solution as a result of combined and cooperative effort. These tasks test the qualities of leadership, organisational ability and power of cooperation.

5. Tentative Schedule of Tests

The candidates generally stay with the S.S.B. for about 4-5 days. The schedule of tests is as follows and the tests are administered in the same order:

First day: Reception and filling of the Questionnaire of the Board.

Second day:

(1) Intelligence Tests:

(i) Verbal.

(ii) Non-verbal.

(2) Personality Tests:

(i) Word Association Test (WAT).

(ii) Picture Story Test or Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

(iii) Verbal Situation Test (VST) or Situation Reaction Test (SRT).

(iv) Self-description Test.

Third day:

(1) Indoor Tests:

(i) Group Discussion.

(ii) Military Planning.

(2) Outdoor Tests:

(i) Progressive Group Test (PGT).

(ii) Inter Group Obstacle Race or Snake Race.

(iii) Half Group Test (HGT).

(iv) Command Task.

(v) Interview.

Some candidates are interviewed while other are subjected to GTO tests.

Fourth day:

(1) Individual obstacles.

(2) Lecturette (Indoor test).

(3) Final Group Test (FGT).

(4) Interview (continued).

Fifth day: Final Board Conference.

All the members of the Board meet and assess the performance and results of the candidates.

Each candidate appears before the S.S.B. for a Personality Test for a couple of minutes and he is asked some general questions like the following:

- (1) Did you like the food?
- (2) Did you enjoy your stay here?
- (3) Have you any suggestions to make?
- (4) Where had you been in the evening?
- (5) Did you do any sightseeing?
- (6) If yes, which place did you see?
- (7) Did you go out alone or in company?

Remember that this appearance before the Board is just to let them have a good look at you. It has no bearing on the assessment by the members of the Board.

6. Announcement of Results

Immediately after the S.S.B. conference, the results are announced by the Technical Officer.

Earlier all the successful candidates were put through Physical Endurance Test followed by a Medical Examination. It lasted three or four days.

Physical Endurance Tests are now no longer in vogue.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GUIDANCE OF CANDIDATES

The aim of each and every candidate presenting himself at the S.S.B. is to get selected. So far as the Board is concerned, its objective is to select as many of the candidates as are able to qualify the tests given to them. The tests are quite comprehensive and well designed and are meant to spot out those candidates who would make good officers and would be an asset to the country's Defence Forces. There is no gainsaying the fact that the officers so selected have to shoulder a great deal of responsibility and should, therefore, have not only a keen sense of reverence and sacrifice for their motherland but also ample intelligence, zeal, originality, initiative, drive and valour.

At the S.S.B., a candidate is assessed and judged from the view point whether he would make a good officer in any of three wings of the Defence Forces, *i.e.*, Army, Navy or Air Force. The