Frequently Asked Questions about the SIFT

What does the SIFT measure?

The SIFT is a measure of multiple aptitudes. It assesses mathematical skills and aptitude, the ability to extract meaning from written passages, familiarity with mechanical concepts and simple machines, the ability to perform mental rotations to determine the orientation of aircraft in 3-dimensional space, and the ability to quickly recognize patterns within objects and groups of images. The SIFT also measures an examinee's knowledge of aviation terminology, familiarity with aircraft components and function, knowledge of basic aerodynamic principles, and a grasp of basic flight rules and regulations. Performance on this part of the battery can be improved by study, and examinees with aviation experience will typically do well.

All components of the SIFT have proven to be excellent predictors of training performance. That is, individuals who enter the flight program with high levels of cognitive aptitude and have background knowledge of aviation concepts are more likely to both achieve higher grades in aviation training and successfully complete the training program. By including multiple subtests that measure different constructs shown to predict success in aviation training, we can account for the more variance in training outcomes and help ensure that aviation programs make more efficient and accurate selection decisions.

How well does the SIFT predict training performance and attrition?

At present, the validity of the SIFT is still being assessed by Army personnel. However, similar test batteries used for aviation selection in the Navy and Air Force typically yield validity coefficients of approximately 0.40 between selection test scores and training performance (e.g., academic grades, flight grades). Validity coefficients range from 0 (the test does not predict grades in training at all) to 1 (the test predicts training grades perfectly). These validities compare favorably with industry selection testing standards. In addition, these tests have been a valuable resource for predicting attrition, or the student's probability of completing aviation training.

How long does the SIFT take to administer?

Total time required to take the SIFT may vary from individual to individual. All together, checking in at the exam site, exam setup, an optional exam break, and completing the SIFT may take up to 3 hours, though many individuals can often complete the exam in approximately 2 hours.

What if I don't answer all of the questions on the test before time expires?

The time limits and number of questions for the SIFT subtests are as follows:

- Simple Drawings (SD) – 2 minutes, 100 questions
- Hidden Figures (HF) – 5 minutes, 50 questions
- Army Aviation Information Test (AAIT) – 30 minutes, 40 questions
- Spatial Apperception Test (SAT) – 10 minutes, 25 questions
- Reading Comprehension Test (RCT)– 30 minutes, 20 questions
- Math Skills Test (MST) – 40 minutes, test length varies
- Mechanical Comprehension Test (MCT) – 15 minutes, test length varies

The recommended strategies vary between different components of the test:

Simple Drawings and Hidden Figures: Work quickly and don't guess. The SD and HF subtest scores are derived from the number of problems that you answer correctly, with a portion of the number of problems answered

incorrectly being deducted from your score. In the majority of cases, examinees will not be able to answer all questions presented. Responding as quickly and as accurately as possible without randomly guessing as time is about to expire will, in most cases, work in the favor of the examinee.

Army Aviation Information Test, Spatial Apperception Test, and Reading Comprehension Test: Work quickly and guess at items you haven't reached if time is about to expire. The AAIT, SAT, and RCT include a fixed number of questions for each subtest. On these subtests, any items left unanswered will be scored as incorrect. It is therefore to the examinee's advantage to rule out poor answer choices on remaining questions and make educated guesses if time is about to expire.

Computer Adaptive Subtests (Math Skills Test and Mechanical Comprehension Test): Work quickly and don't guess. Due to the nature of adaptive tests, the number and difficulty of questions presented to different examinees may vary on the MST and MCT. Scores generated by examinees who fail to complete a sufficient number of items on any SIFT adaptive subtest before time expires may have a penalty applied to their scores. Therefore, examinees are expected to work as briskly as possible without losing accuracy. The severity of the score penalty will increase as the number of questions answered decreases. This penalty will never be applied to scores on adaptive subtests that automatically terminate before time has expired.

On the adaptive subtests, examinees are advised against randomly guessing as time is about to expire. The current time limits for each subtest have been established to allow as many examinees as possible to finish the test without time expiring. If an examinee has worked diligently and quickly on a given subtest, random guessing will, in most cases, be more detrimental to scores than the penalty received for not completing the entire test.

Is there a paper-based version of the SIFT?

The SIFT is available only in a web-based format. The system is operated on a secure server that is monitored and controlled.

What are the current SIFT minimum score requirements?

The current minimum qualifying score to apply for the Army's Aviation Program is 40 (possible scores range from 20 to 80, with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10). As the SIFT is validated, the minimum score may change to correspond with the Aviation Branch / U.S. Army Recruiting Commands' accessions requirements. Contact your local education center for current information.

How will I find out my SIFT scores? Is there any way to find out my scores immediately?

Your results (pass or fail) will be generated immediately after completing the test. You will be instructed to see the Test Control Officer (TCO) / Test Examiner (TE) to obtain your score letter. The score letter must be signed by the TCO / TE to be valid.

How many times can I take the SIFT? Can I retake the SIFT to get a better score?

If you attain a passing, or minimum qualifying, score you are no longer authorized to retake the SIFT. Additionally, if you fail to attain a minimum qualifying score on your first attempt, you may retake the SIFT no earlier than the 181st day following the previous attempt. If you fail to attain a minimum qualifying score on your second attempt, you are no longer authorized to retake the SIFT and are not qualified for the Army's Aviation Program.

Which subtests make the greatest contribution to my final SIFT score?

The formula utilized to compute your SIFT score is proprietary information and will not be released by APT. However, examinees should note that the formula used to calculate the SIFT score is compensatory, meaning that poor performance on a given subtest may often be offset by high performance on another. However, examinees are advised to perform as well as possible on all given subtests.

Where is the nearest SIFT testing location?

Locations that commonly administer the SIFT include:

- Post-servicing Education Centers
- Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS)
- Military Academies / ROTC Programs

You will need to schedule your SIFT exam at the location at which you intend to test. For military service members, contact your local servicing education center. For WOFT applicants, contact a recruiter for assistance in scheduling the SIFT.

What type of identification do I need to bring to the testing site?

You should bring some form of photo identification (i.e., driver's license, military ID card, passport) and verification of your social security number (i.e., social security card).

Is the SIFT offered in any language other than English?

No. At present, the SIFT is administered in English only.

How much does it cost to take the SIFT?

There is no charge to take the SIFT.

Can I use a calculator on the test?

No, the math problems on the exam are designed to be completed without the use of a calculator, but a few formulas are provided. Each examinee is provided scrap paper on which to compute problems.

What should I bring with me on the day of the test?

You will need to bring some form of photo identification (i.e., driver's license, military ID card, passport) and verification of your social security number (i.e., social security card).

Electronic devices (e.g., smart phones, cameras, etc.) are not permitted in the testing room. Examinees must stow these items in their automobiles or leave them with the exam proctor before proceeding into the testing room.

In addition, personal belongings (e.g., book bags) should not be brought into the testing room.

Paper and pencils will be supplied for you at the testing facility.

I have seen study guides for military aviation tests in bookstores. Would these guides help me study for the SIFT?

APT / OPFD does not endorse any commercial study guides, but the guides might be helpful for examinees who want to acquire testing strategies, review and practice math principles and problems, familiarize themselves with military history and aviation terminology, and practice pacing on timed tests.

Who can I contact if I have additional questions about the SIFT?

For any additional questions about the SIFT, please contact the Army Personnel Testing-Program Office at usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.tagd-army-personnel-testing@mail.mil.