



## Medicine

### Question

Are medical 'tests' always useful?

### Premise

It is difficult to imagine practicing medicine without 'tests'. The last twenty years have seen an explosion in the use of blood tests, endoscopy, ultrasound, computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging and positron emission tomography to name but a few ways of examining the body. How do clinicians decide which test(s) to order? How much of modern medical practice is driven by fear of litigation or, in the private sector, profit? What are the risks of finding unexpected pathology – or could this be a benefit?

### Things to consider at the outset

The question is deliberately open-ended to allow innovative and creative thinking – there is no 'right or wrong' answer. You could start by thinking about how medicine was practiced before the tests that we take for granted today were developed.

### Structuring your piece of writing

Consider structuring your work like a short scientific paper, with an abstract – a short paragraph that summarises the whole answer – followed by a main body of text comprising separate paragraphs that expands your argument. It is quite all right to use subheadings if you think that they will be useful. This may be different to how you have been used to writing – you are essentially starting with your conclusion – however, scientists are busy people and like to see a concise summary of the main argument before deciding whether to read the rest of the paper. It is worth looking at a short review article (on anything) to see how a scientific paper is written.

Do include diagrams, tables and lists (collectively known as figures) if you think that these will be useful. They are often a more efficient way of presenting information than prose. All figures should have a legend summarising the information that they are conveying. It is important to reference your sources of information throughout the text, with a reference section at the end.