ISSUES OF RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to the **consistency** of a measurement. A measurement is reliable if it gives the same result time after time (i.e. the measurement can be **replicated**). If a measurement can be replicated, then the results can be said to be **reliable**. Two basic types of reliability are **inter-rater reliability** and **intra-rater reliability**.

Inter-rater reliability refers to the extent to which two or more different observers (or raters) give consistent estimates of the *same* object or phenomenon.

Intra-rater reliability is when the *same* test is given to the *same* individual(s) on two or more occasions. If there has been no change in the thing being measured, then the same score (or other measurement) should be obtained. Note that this is also called **test-retest reliability**.

The main way in which reliability can be improved is by making sure that there is clarity in whatever is being measured. One way to achieve this is by using a **pilot study** to check that the proposed method of measurement works properly. When more than one observer is taking measurements, the way that they collect and record data should be **standardised**.