

How Am I Smart?

Discover, Strengthen, and Use Children's Intelligences

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1. **Word Smart.** They think with: words. When excited, they: talk and might write. Children who are particularly smart in this area can argue, persuade, entertain, and/or instruct effectively through the spoken word. They're often trivia experts. They tend to be masters of literacy: they read a lot, write clearly, listen intently, and/or speak well.
2. **Logic Smart.** They think with: questions. When excited, they: ask more questions. Traits of logically inclined children include the ability to reason, sequence, categorize, and think in terms of cause-effect and comparison-contrast relationships.
3. **Picture Smart.** They think with: their eyes and with pictures. When excited, they: add to their pictures (in their minds and on paper). Children who are picture smart are very sensitive to visual details. They have the ability to observe, transform, and re-create different aspects of the visual-spatial world.
4. **Music Smart.** They think with: rhythms and melodies. When excited, they: make music. Musically gifted children are able to hear, appreciate, and/or produce rhythms and melodies. They often have a good ear, can sing in tune, keep time to music, and listen to different musical selections with some degree of discernment.
5. **Body Smart.** They think with: movement and touch. When excited, they: move more. The evidence of body intelligence can be seen in large motor and/or small motor skills and interests. These children are talented in controlling their body movements and/or in handling objects skillfully. They may enjoy physical pursuits like walking, sports, dancing, acting, or camping and/or they may be skilled at activities like sewing, carpentry, or model-building.
6. **Nature Smart.** They think with: patterns. When excited, they: go outside. Children who would rather be outdoors than indoors may be strong in this smart. They tend to love animals and are knowledgeable about them. They also are skilled at recognizing and classifying plants, minerals, and animals. The ability to recognize cultural artifacts like cars or sneakers may also depend on this smart.
7. **People Smart.** They think with: other people. When excited, they: talk to people. Children with this intelligence are able to discern and then respond to the moods, intentions, and desires of others. Therefore, they tend to be leaders. They have the ability (for good or bad) to get inside another person and view the world from that individual's perspective.
8. **Self Smart.** They think with: deep reflection. When excited, they: spend time alone thinking. Children strong in this smart can use their self-understanding to enrich and guide their lives. They tend to enjoy quiet times of deep soul-searching. They also need peace, space, and privacy. They are fiercely independent, highly goal-directed, and intensely self-disciplined.

Eight Ways to Awaken Children's Smarts

Create new experiences.

Strategically plan to do new things. New experiences awaken interest and ability.

Go exploring.

Investigate what you discover. Exploring awakens interest and ability.

Engage in discussions.

Don't be afraid of questions. Ask ones related to each of the smarts and answer them with rich language. Discussions awaken interest and ability.

Attend cultural events.

Experience the symphony, ballet, and area festivals. Culture awakens interest and ability.

Play creatively alone and with others.

Play engages curiosity, discovery, and imagination. Play awakens interest and ability.

Watch less television and discuss what you watch.

This will give you more time for more valuable activities. Watching less TV awakens interest and ability.

Read together.

Read a variety of books and other materials representing many topics. Reading awakens interest and ability.

Slow down and quiet down.

The brain needs quiet, peace, and time to reflect deeply and personally about new understandings. Slowing down and quieting down awakens interest and ability.

Eight Ways to Paralyze Children's Smarts

Fear of failure.

If we're not willing to embrace new ideas or try new activities because we're afraid we'll be wrong, we won't grow. Our smarts may atrophy in this environment.

Perfectionism.

People often become perfectionistic because they haven't taken risks and learned that mistakes aren't deadly and failure isn't final. They may believe they are what they do - and, therefore, they must do everything perfectly. One or two mistakes may be all that's necessary for paralysis to begin.

Not respecting the need for practice or study time.

Being expected to be performance-ready all the time can cause children to give up and stop trying. It's not realistic. Paralysis occurs.

Ignoring people's performances.

Constantly ignoring or playing down people's performances is the opposite of the above problem and it, too, can also have a paralyzing effect. When dad never goes to the science fair or mom never attends the band concert, paralysis can be right around the corner.

Not allowing for exploration and self-discovery.

Being only interested in right answers, not creative answers or how people arrived at the conclusion they did, can cause paralysis.

Dismissing or ignoring people's questions.

Kids have told me that when they often hear "You don't need to know that," "That's not important," and "Look it up," they stop asking. They stop thinking and growing.

Not being available.

Except for children and adults who are very self smart, constantly having to do things alone is draining and not as fulfilling. Not having someone to brainstorm with or ask questions of can result in temporary paralysis.

Being quickly critical.

When people look first for what's wrong rather than for what's right, this negativity can paralyze. Discouragement sets in from words spoken with a harsh tone and when uplifting words someone wants and needs to hear are never spoken. Regular looks of disgust are also a sure way for negativity to paralyze.

Eight Ways to Strengthen Children's Smarts

Teach, don't tell.

There's a difference between being told to improve and being taught missing skills and content so you can improve.

Provide relevant, varied, and meaningful practice spaced over time.

Redundant, boring practice decreases interest and doesn't always help ability.

Arrange for meaningful application of information.

When children are encouraged to apply ideas in meaningful ways, relevance is clear and ideas can more easily be connected to others. This increases understanding and retention.

Read to children and discuss things deeply.

These activities increase listening vocabulary, one of the most important predictors of school success.

Get help.

Whether for you or for your children, sometimes tutoring is what it will take. Maybe private lessons shouldn't just be for music anymore. But, if you know an area can't improve much, because of abundant evidence of lack of interest and ability, then back off.

Use weekends and the summer to explore new things and to develop new interests.

Don't always accept "I don't want to." Sometimes push children to try new activities.

Participate with children in various activities.

Don't always stand on the sidelines. Dig in and be a part of the action. You'll see and hear more and, therefore, know how to help more effectively.

Plan well to increase both interest and ability.

Increased interest can cause adults and children to invest effort to develop ability. Greater ability keeps interest alive.

Selected References

Koch, K. (2007). *How am I smart? A parent's guide to multiple intelligences*. Chicago, IL: Moody.

www.CelebrateKids.com - Please go to our website to learn about our other multiple intelligence products.

www.howardgardner.com - The Multiple Intelligences Model was identified and researched by Dr. Howard Gardner of Harvard University. You can learn more about his work and his many theoretical books at his website.