

There's More Than One Way to Be Smart!

Parents have always known that children's talents vary widely. Now researchers have found that there are many pieces that make up intelligence. They know that children develop their abilities at different ages.

Here is information to help you think about—and build—your child's special gifts. By building on children's strengths, you can help them do well in school...and in life.

What Do We Mean By 'Intelligence'?

Schools used to think of "intelligence" in an academic way. Standardized intelligence tests mainly measured language and math ability. Children who could remember lots of information and then recall it on a test were considered intelligent. Others were not.

In the real world we see intelligence in different ways. One theory was developed by Howard Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University. He believes there are seven different kinds of intelligence.

1. Linguistic – Skill with words.
2. Logical – Gift for numbers and reasoning.
3. Spatial – Talent for pictures and images.
4. Musical – Command of tone, rhythm and timbre.
5. Kinesthetic – Physical expertise, such as in dance or athletics.
6. Intrapersonal – Self-knowledge and understanding.
7. Interpersonal – Leadership and empathy for others.

How Can This Help My Child?

1. Explain to your child the different kinds of intelligence. Point out the areas where he is strong. Children who feel good about their abilities are usually more willing to learn.
2. Talk with your school. Find out about activities the school might have for children with your child's abilities.
3. Look for opportunities outside of school. A child talented in athletics may need to play in an organized league. A child with special musical talent needs lessons from an early age.
4. Help your child use study methods based on his strongest abilities. Students learn faster and with less effort by doing what they do best.

If Your Child Excels in This Area, Offer These Study Ideas:

1. Linguistic: Use the spoken or written word. Make written homework summaries for yourself during study sessions. Edit your notes down to a few key words on index cards. Speak your study notes into a tape recorder. Play back your recorded notes to review.
2. Logical-Mathematical: Use numbers, calculations, logic, classification and critical thinking. Organize your study area. Make a study calendar. Set up daily study priorities. When you organize your study time, you're likely to study better.
3. Spatial: Use visual aids, color, art, metaphor or visual organizers. Make a step-by-step flow chart of how you are going to study. Hang it where you can see it. Draw diagrams of the material you are studying. Use a different colored notebook for each subject.
4. Musical: Try studying with soft classical music. Music helps some people think. Mozart and Bach are good choices. Use rhythm to help you remember. Compose a song summarizing what you studied.
5. Bodily-Kinesthetic: Involve your entire body—acting out a scene, for example. Don't try to sit still as you work. Picture in your mind the main points you are studying. Pretend they are in different places around the house. Walk around and fix them in your memory.
6. Interpersonal: Find a study partner. Teach someone else what you are learning. As you study, think how you will explain the material to your partner. Use a game to get your message across. Make up examples. Develop a quiz. When you teach it, you'll find you know it.
7. Intrapersonal: Associate the new material you are studying with things you already know. Make the connections a game as you study. (The shape of West Virginia might remind you of a fist with your thumb sticking out and index finger pointing upwards.)