

## Multiple Intelligences

**Background:** The theory of multiple intelligences was developed in 1983 by Dr. Howard Gardner, professor of education at Harvard University. It suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence, based on I.Q. testing, is far too limited. Instead, Dr. Gardner proposes eight different intelligences to account for a broader range of human potential in children and adults. These intelligences are:

1. **Linguistic:** These "word smart" people learn best through language including speaking, writing, reading, and listening. They are able to verbally or in writing explain, convince, and express themselves. They enjoy writing and creating with words.
2. **Logical-Mathematical:** These "number /reasoning smart" people learn best through numbers, reasoning, and problem solving. They are able to create and manipulate visuals and create mental pictures from many perspectives. They like to weigh, measure, calculate, and organize data.
3. **Bodily-kinesthetic:** These "body smart" people learn best through physical activity such as dance, hands-on tasks, constructing models, and any kind of movement. They are able to manipulate and control objects, as well as express their ideas through movement.
4. **Spatial:** These "picture smart" people learn best visually and tend to organize their thinking spatially. They like to think and create pictures. They are also drawn to information that is presented in a visual form.
5. **Musical:** These "music smart" people learn best through sounds including listening and making sounds such as songs, rhythms, patterns, and other types of auditory expression. They are able to use inductive and deductive reasoning and identify relationships in data.
6. **Intrapersonal:** These "self smart" people learn best through meta-cognitive practices such as getting in touch with their feelings and self motivation. They are able to concentrate and be mindful.
7. **Interpersonal:** These "social smart" people learn best through interaction with other people through discussions, cooperative work, or social activities. They are able to create synergy in a room by being aware of the feelings and motives of others.
8. **Naturalist:** These "nature" people learn best through the interactions with the environment including outdoor activities, field trips, and involvement with plants and animals. They see the subtle meanings and patterns in nature and the world around them. They are able to adapt
9. **Existentialist:** These "wondering" people learn best through seeing the "big picture" of human existence by asking philosophical questions about the world. Technology tools include email, chat, listservs, teleconferencing, and other interactive communication tools to help address their questions.

Dr. Gardner says that our schools and culture focus most of their attention on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence. We esteem the highly articulate or logical people of our culture. However, Dr. Gardner says that we should also place equal attention on individuals who show gifts in the other intelligences: the artists, architects, musicians, naturalists, designers, dancers, therapists, entrepreneurs,

## Facilitator's Body of Knowledge Research Project

and others who enrich the world in which we live. Unfortunately, many children who have these gifts don't receive much reinforcement for them in school. Many of these kids, in fact, end up being labeled "learning disabled," "ADD (attention deficit disorder)," or simply underachievers, when their unique ways of thinking and learning aren't addressed by a heavily linguistic or logical-mathematical classroom.

The theory of multiple intelligences proposes a major transformation in the way our schools are run. It suggests that teachers be trained to present their lessons in a wide variety of ways using music, cooperative learning, art activities, role play, multimedia, field trips, inner reflection, and much more. The good news is that the theory has grabbed the attention of many educators around the country, and hundreds of schools are currently using its philosophy to redesign the way it educates children. The bad news is that there are thousands of schools still out there that teach in the same old dull way, through dry lectures, and boring worksheets and textbooks. The challenge is to get this information out to many more teachers, school administrators, and others who work with children, so that each child has the opportunity to learn in ways harmonious with their unique minds.

The theory of multiple intelligences also has strong implications for adult learning and development. Many adults find themselves in jobs that do not make optimal use of their most highly developed intelligences (for example, the highly bodily-kinesthetic individual who is stuck in a linguistic or logical desk-job when he or she would be much happier in a job where they could move around, such as a recreational leader, a forest ranger, or physical therapist). The

theory gives adults a whole new way to look at their lives; examining potentials that they left behind in their childhood but now have the opportunity to develop through courses, hobbies, or other programs of self-development.

For example, if you're teaching or learning about the law of supply and demand in economics, you might read about it (linguistic), study mathematical formulas that express it (logical-mathematical), examine a graphic chart that illustrates the principle (spatial), observe the law in the natural world (naturalist) or in the human world of commerce (interpersonal); examine the law in terms of your own body [e.g. when you supply your body with lots of food, the hunger demand goes down; when there's very little supply, your stomach's demand for food goes way up and you get hungry] (bodily-kinesthetic and intrapersonal); and/or write a song (or find an existing song) that demonstrates the law (perhaps Dylan's "Too Much of Nothing?").

**Application:** One of the most remarkable features of the theory is how it provides several other ways in which the material might be presented to facilitate effective learning or to engage people in a different way. Whether you are an instructor or a facilitator, or just an adult learner, you can seek better ways of pursuing any subject of interest, the same basic guidelines apply.

### Resources:

[http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple\\_intelligences.htm](http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple_intelligences.htm)

<http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic68.htm>

[http://www.education-world.com/a\\_curr/curr054.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr054.shtml)