

Mensa Testing by Lisa Longport

Throughout your life, you have always been considered intellectually gifted. Childhood games against your peers were ridiculously easy to win. Adults were always startled by your facile grasp of complicated ideas. In matters of the mind, you were always considered superior.

Now, as you mature, you realize that you are not entirely unique. You have become cognizant of the fact that there are other, equally intelligent people in the universe. The question inevitably arises, "How do I compare to the others?" The Mensa test will readily answer this question.

Induction into Mensa requires a proven, significantly superior mental aptitude. As the foremost high IQ society with members from around the globe, Mensa, indeed, comprises an elite and exclusive group. Individuals who have attained a score in the top 2% on any properly administered intelligence test are eligible for membership. That membership crosses all cultural and economic divides. Politicians, entertainers, as well as scientists and savants enjoy the benefits of inclusion in this esteemed club.

To pass Mensa test, one must undoubtedly be naturally gifted in an intellectual sense. However, there are certain strategies that can be applied to increase one's chances of acceptance. An absolute necessity is a lifelong love of learning and knowledge. This key component is essential and it is taken for granted. After all, without this trait, you probably wouldn't even be reading this treatise. In any case, a passion for acquiring, categorizing and retaining seemingly insignificant data is a must for any Mensa applicant.

With that said, here are some tips and strategies on how to pass the Mensa test.

Vocabulary

Read the dictionary. This is in no way a facetious statement. I am as serious as a heart attack. You must, literally, read the dictionary every day. Embrace words and love them. Understand their connotations as well as their denotations. Typically, more than half the questions on a Mensa qualifying test will involve vocabulary, etymology or word analogies. Without an encyclopedic knowledge of words, you are like the man with a knife at the proverbial gunfight. You are simply outclassed. Here's a short list of must-know words, and yes, they are ALL spelled correctly: rarefied, epitome, misspelled, dilemma, discreet and the name Aloysius. Learn them as they repeatedly arise on intelligence tests.

Analogies

A man without a woman is like a fish without a bicycle. Understanding analogies is like... well, you get the idea. It is imperative that you have the ability to make connections. Analogies emphasize the relationships between things, whether physical objects, living creatures or ideas. Recognizing the most basic, inherent qualities of something is the first step in formulating analogies. Don't take anything for granted. An analogy may simply be about the colour of an item or, more complexly, about its molecular structure. It may even be as simple as the number of letters in the word. Examine every facet of the question before deciding the answer. Science, by the way, is but the finding of an analogy.

Mathematics

A fundamental and significant grasp of basic math, algebra, geometry and logic are all necessary components to success in how to pass the Mensa test. In addition, one must be able to practically apply the principles of each of these mathematical disciplines. The study of puzzle books will instruct one in logical thinking. Mathematical word puzzles will help with critical thinking. It is important to understand the different types of problems that will be presented on the test. Nothing helps more than to have encountered a problem before and to have a strategy developed to solve it.

Logical Reasoning

There is no avoiding it, any hopeful Mensa aspirant must come to grips with puzzles. It is not as difficult as it seems. Puzzles tend to fall into predictable categories. They are easily solved if one has previously encountered a similar one. One just uses the same solution pattern. The key is in recognizing the type of puzzle. If one can recognize the type of puzzle, and remembers the previously devised solution pattern, then solving the puzzle is child's play.

Spatial Reasoning

Spatial reasoning is more commonly known as pattern recognition. A typical test will ask that you examine a series of images that change in discrete but predictable ways. You are then asked to choose the next image in the series. Practice proves invaluable in this specific area of the test. One must observe the minutest detail and recognize its importance in the mutability of the pattern. Then, armed with this knowledge, the correct pattern can be established.

Physical Preparation

Mentally, your preparation is complete. You have devoured endless puzzle books and vocabulary aids. Algebraic problems are second nature. You can analogize in your sleep. Bring on the dancing horses wherever they may roam.

All is good as the test day draws near. Your mental ability is at peak performance. You feel that anything can be accomplished. It is a most excellent state of mind, highly desirable and one to be enjoyed. Another factor, however, needs to be addressed to pass Mensa test. One's physical state cannot be underplayed. A restful sleep and a balanced, healthy breakfast will provide a distinct advantage during the test. Your brain, like the rest of your body, functions optimally if provided with the proper amount of nutrients and rest. Do not dismiss this need for a proper physical preparation.

Some additional, simple tips will serve to improve the applicant's score. Unlike traditional tests, you want to progress through the test as quickly as possible. In many instances, the later, tougher questions score higher. You need to answer these questions for an acceptable score. Use your intuition the beginning of the test and answer quickly. You must ration your time and leave some additional time for the more difficult questions at the end.

In the end, a gifted intelligence, nurtured by learned teachers and fostered by an undeniable thirst for knowledge is essential for success on any IQ test. Whether these traits also translate into success in life are essentially unknowable. Only a guide is offered here. A few tips and strategies can only take you so far. The rest is up to you.