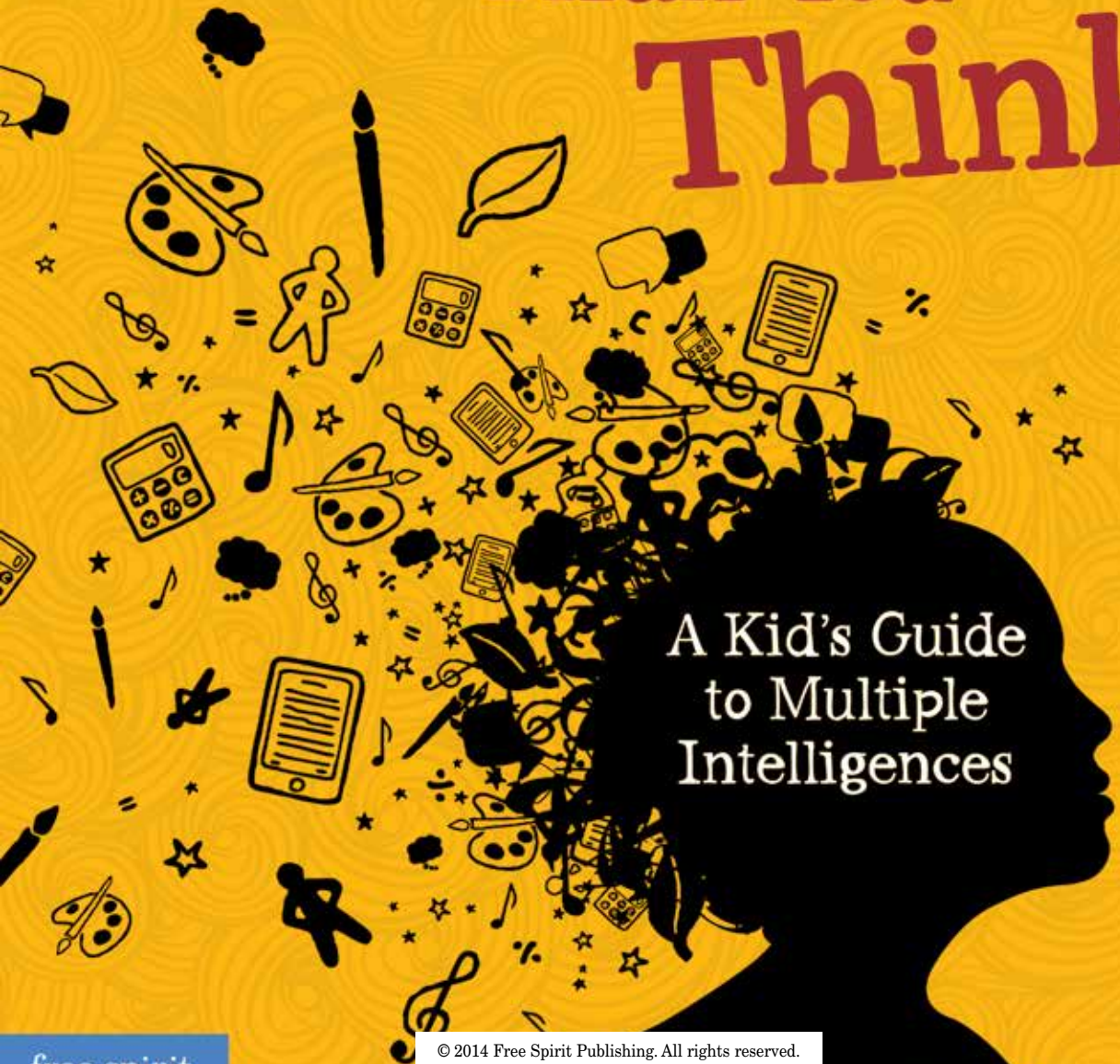


Revised &
Updated

You're Smarter Than You Think



A Kid's Guide
to Multiple
Intelligences

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free spirit
PUBLISHING®

Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D.

You're Smarter Than You Think



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Dedication

To my sister, Jane

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Contents

Introduction: Why You're Smarter Than You Think	1
The Theory of Multiple Intelligences	2
About This Book	5



Chapter 1: Word Smart	8
Quick Quiz.....	8
What Does It Mean to Be Word Smart?	9
The Spoken Word.....	10
The Written Word	12
Using Your Words in Writing	14
Other Ways of Being Word Smart.....	15
Fun Ways to Become More Word Smart.....	17
What If Word Smart Isn't Speaking Your Language?	19
What If You're a Word Smart Whiz?.....	22
Look to the Future.....	23
Get Smart with These Resources	24



Chapter 2: Music Smart	25
Quick Quiz.....	25
What Does It Mean to Be Music Smart?	26
Developing an Ear for Music	28
Making Music.....	30
Writing Music	32
Getting in Tune with Your Musical Mind.....	33
Fun Ways to Become More Music Smart.....	35
What If Music Smart Isn't "Playing Your Song"?	37
What If You're a Music Smart Maestro?.....	40
Look to the Future.....	42
Get Smart with These Resources	42



Chapter 3: Logic Smart 44

Quick Quiz.....	44
What Does It Mean to Be Logic Smart?	45
Measuring Your Math Know-How.....	47
Studying Your Science Savvy.....	51
Computing Your Computer Skills	54
Fun Ways to Become More Logic Smart	55
What If You Think You Lack Logic Smarts?.....	57
What If You're a Logic Leader?	59
Look to the Future.....	61
Get Smart with These Resources	61



Chapter 4: Picture Smart 63

Quick Quiz.....	63
What Does It Mean to Be Picture Smart?.....	64
Being Smart About Art	67
Being Picture Smart in 3-D.....	70
The Power of Invention.....	73
Fun Ways to Become More Picture Smart.....	75
What If You Can't Picture Yourself as Picture Smart?	78
What If You're a Picture Smart Pro?.....	80
Look to the Future.....	83
Get Smart with These Resources	84



Chapter 5: Body Smart 86

Quick Quiz.....	86
What Does It Mean to Be Body Smart?.....	87
Keeping in Touch with Your Body.....	88
The Mind and Body Connection	91
Your Expressive, Artistic Body	94
Exercising Your Body Smart Brain.....	96

Fun Ways to Become More Body Smart.....	100
What If You Feel Out of Touch with the Body Smart You?	103
What If You're a Body Smart Big Shot?	104
Look to the Future.....	106
Get Smart with These Resources	107





Chapter 6: People Smart 108

Quick Quiz.....	108
What Does It Mean to Be People Smart?	109
Reaching Out.....	112
Helping Out	114
Leading the Way.....	117
Fun Ways to Become More People Smart	119
What If You Need to Polish Your People Smart Skills?.....	122
What If You're a People Smart Powerhouse?	124
Look to the Future.....	126
Get Smart with These Resources	127



Chapter 7: Self Smart..... 128

Quick Quiz.....	128
What Does It Mean to Be Self Smart?.....	129
Knowing Yourself	131
Understanding Your Feelings	134
Reaching for Your Goals.....	138
Fun Ways to Become More Self Smart	142
What If You Have Self-Doubts About Your Self Smarts?.....	144
What If You're a Self Smart Superstar?.....	147
Look to the Future.....	149
Get Smart with These Resources	150

	Chapter 8: Nature Smart	151
	Quick Quiz.....	151
	What Does It Mean to Be Nature Smart?.....	152
	Exploring Your World	154
	Caring About the Earth.....	156
	Caring for Plants.....	159
	Caring for Animals.....	160
	Fun Ways to Become More Nature Smart.....	163
	What If You're Not "Wild" About Your Nature Smart Skills?.....	167
	What If You're a Nature Smart Natural?	169
	Look to the Future.....	172
	Get Smart with These Resources	173
	Chapter 9: Life Smart	174
	Quick Quiz.....	174
	What Does It Mean to Be Life Smart?.....	175
	Getting Philosophical	177
	Learning About Religion and Spirituality	179
	Getting Cosmic About the Universe.....	181
	Fun Ways to Become More Life Smart	183
	What If Life Smart Isn't Looking Too Lively for You?.....	185
	What If You're a Life Smart Luminary?.....	187
	Look to the Future.....	189
	Get Smart with These Resources	190
	A Few Final Words: Playing It Smart Every Day	191
	Index	192
	About the Author	199

Introduction

Why You're Smarter Than You Think

Do you think you're smart? What does it mean to be smart anyway? Many people believe being smart is all about getting good grades and high test scores in school. Lots of people think being smart means you can do things like:

- read really well
- solve math problems quickly
- recite a bunch of facts
- understand everything about computers

So, what do *you* think being smart means?

Here's something that may surprise you: Being smart isn't only about getting good grades, scoring well on tests, and memorizing stuff. In fact, there are lots of other ways to show your smarts—through art, music, athletics, nature, emotions, and getting along with others (to name a few). In this book, you'll discover that there are many ways to be smart.

For about the past 100 years, experts have often used IQ tests to figure out how smart people are. IQ stands for *intelligence quotient*, and it is a measure of how someone scores on the test. The test has you solve math problems, define words, create designs, repeat numbers from memory, and do other tasks. Maybe you've taken an IQ test.

Many people think that IQ tests are the best way to measure how smart someone is. IQ tests aren't perfect though, and there's a lot they can't tell you. They can't predict what you'll do when you grow up or what you

can achieve in your life. And the test questions may reflect the biases, or opinions, of the people who created them. Besides, no test can test for everything. The questions don't always give you the best chance to show off your different kinds of smarts. IQ tests generally focus most of their attention on being good with words or numbers, and they neglect other important things like music, art, nature, and social ability.

Recently, people have challenged the idea that IQ is the best measure of intelligence. One of those people is a psychologist and a professor of education from Harvard University named Dr. Howard Gardner. Thanks in part to his work, experts now have a whole new idea of what it means to be smart.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Since IQ tests are limited and don't test for the wide range of abilities that people often show and use, Dr. Gardner suggests they aren't a true measure of how smart someone really is.

Dr. Gardner decided there isn't just *one* way to be smart but rather *many different ways*. He used his research with kids and adults to discover more about how people learn. Dr. Gardner found out that people seemed to learn and show their smarts in a lot of ways. He also noticed that different parts of the brain seemed to be tied to the different ways of being smart. He came up with an idea, or theory, to explain the wide range of abilities he was seeing. He called his idea the *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (or *MI theory* for short).

If you think about it, Dr. Gardner's idea about different kinds of intelligence makes sense. There are plenty of examples of people who haven't scored well on IQ tests or who haven't even been tested on what they're good at doing, but who are clearly very smart in many other ways. These might include people who paint, climb mountains, make business deals, explore nature, or invent machines. Certainly, you can score well on an IQ test and still do those things, but your test results won't necessarily show everything that you're good at.

MI theory says there are eight (and maybe nine) different kinds of intelligence—eight or nine ways to be smart! (There may even be more, but they haven't been identified yet.) Each of these different kinds of intelligence can be described by certain traits, activities, and interests.

When Dr. Gardner published books about his theory, he came up with names for the different kinds of intelligences. Here are the eight kinds of smart he talked about: (1) Linguistic Intelligence, (2) Musical Intelligence, (3) Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, (4) Spatial Intelligence, (5) Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, (6) Interpersonal Intelligence, (7) Intrapersonal Intelligence, and (8) Naturalist Intelligence. There also may be a ninth intelligence called Existential Intelligence or Life Smart (we'll talk about it in the last chapter of this book, see page 174).

I've been studying Dr. Gardner's work for over 25 years now. Over the years, I've written many books for adults on multiple intelligences. But because I've also spent many years teaching kids, I wanted to write a book that would help young people. I hope to explain MI theory in a way that makes it easy for you to understand, because I think it's important for kids like you to make the most of all your smarts.

To make things easier, I've created some simpler language to describe the nine intelligences:



Word Smart (Linguistic Intelligence): You like words and how they're used in reading, writing, or speaking. You may enjoy word play and word games, foreign languages, storytelling, spelling, creative writing, or reading. For more about this intelligence, see Chapter 1.



Music Smart (Musical Intelligence): You appreciate music, rhythm, melody, and patterns in sounds. You are capable of hearing tone and pitch. You may appreciate many different kinds of music and enjoy activities like singing, playing instruments, listening to music, or attending concerts. For more about this intelligence, see Chapter 2.



Logic Smart (Logical-Mathematical Intelligence): You enjoy figuring things out and may understand numbers and math concepts, like finding patterns, and have fun with science. You may like riddles, brain-teasers, computers, creating your own codes, or doing science experiments. For more about this intelligence, see Chapter 3.



Picture Smart (Spatial Intelligence): You love to look at the world and see all the interesting things in it. You may be able to picture things or images in your head. You may be able to take what you see and use your imagination to show others your vision through art, design, photography, architecture, or invention. For more about this intelligence, see Chapter 4.



Body Smart (Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence): You're graceful and comfortable in your body, using it to learn new skills or to express yourself in different ways. You may be an athlete or use your body artistically in dance or acting. Or you may have more interest in working with your hands and doing activities like crafts, building models, or repairing things. For more about this intelligence, see Chapter 5.



People Smart (Interpersonal Intelligence): You're interested in other people and how people interact with each other. You may be part of student government or a peer mediation group at school, have lots of friends, be involved in neighborhood causes, or just enjoy being in casual social groups. For more about this intelligence, see Chapter 6.



Self Smart (Intrapersonal Intelligence): You're aware of and understand your own feelings, what you're good at, and the areas you want to improve. You often understand yourself better than others understand you. You may keep a journal, create plans for the future, reflect on the past, or set goals for yourself. For more about this intelligence, see Chapter 7.



Nature Smart (Naturalist Intelligence): You're observant and enjoy identifying and classifying things like plants, animals, or rocks. (If you live in the city, you may classify other things like books or what your classmates wear.) You probably love being outdoors and may be interested in gardening, taking care of pets, cooking, or getting involved in ecological causes. For more about this intelligence, see Chapter 8.



Life Smart (Existential Intelligence): You think a lot about life. You enjoy discussions related to religious, spiritual, or philosophical issues. You wonder about questions like "When did time begin?" or "Will the universe ever end?" You like to meditate, pray, or think about life,

either with a group or by yourself. You are amazed by beautiful things and feel respect for all living things. You like to lose yourself in creative activities like music, art, or walking in nature. For more about this intelligence, see Chapter 9.

About This Book

The next nine chapters will describe in detail each of the nine ways to be smart. As you read through them, notice where you see yourself most clearly, and where you see your friends, your family, and even your teachers in each of the intelligences. This book will help you learn about who you are and who you can be. Not only that, it will also help you understand and get along better with the people around you—your brothers and sisters, your parents, your friends, your teachers, and others. You’ll learn that everyone has different strengths and different ideas about how to do things, which will make it easier to understand them, get along with them, and even learn from them. So maybe this book will help you pick up basketball tips from your Body Smart older sister, learn from your Logic Smart teacher, or get along better with your Self Smart friend.

Here’s the good news: **You already have all nine kinds of smart.** Really! You’re not just one type of smart. In different degrees, you’re smart in all of the ways this book describes. This doesn’t mean you’re great at everything (no one’s that good); but you do have some ability in each area. As you read about the different intelligences, you’re probably going to discover that you see at least a little bit of yourself in each of them. So, you’re already nine times smarter than you were before you read this.

Here’s more good news:

- **All of the intelligences are *different*, but they’re also *equal*.** No intelligence is better or more important than another.
- **No matter what kind of ability you have in a given smart, you can explore, grow, and develop it.** Whether you have trouble spelling “dictionary” or you’re a future best-selling author, you can become more Word Smart. That’s just one example, but you get the idea.

- **You may know what you're best at, but that doesn't mean you're limited to one kind of intelligence.** Maybe you're Body Smart—congratulations!—but don't let that keep you from the joys of reading, just because it uses another kind of smart (Word Smart).
- **There are many different ways of being smart in each intelligence.** For example, if you're Word Smart, you might discover that you're a top-notch speaker but not such a terrific writer. Or for Body Smart, you might find you're not very good at soccer but you're a great swimmer. With some work, you can build on your strengths and improve your weaknesses.
- **The different smarts work together in almost everything you do.** For example, you might think that painting a picture is just about being Picture Smart. Wrong! Painting a picture can use Body Smart to master different brush techniques, Nature Smart to develop your eye for detail, or even Self Smart to come up with ideas to paint. Most activities rely on a lot of different smarts, not just the most obvious ones. So just as it takes more than Picture Smart to paint a picture, it usually takes more than one intelligence to do anything—whether it's acting, writing a story, playing hockey, or programming a computer.
- **The nine intelligences are found across all cultures and in all countries and age groups.** So no matter who you are or where you're from—no matter what your age or background—you have some form of all of the different intelligences. It's up to you to develop each one as best as you can.

Practically everywhere you look in life you can see signs of multiple intelligences at work. You might see Nature Smart and Picture Smart in your neighbor who has a beautiful garden. You might see Word Smart in your brother who's always writing in his journal, or Music Smart in your mom who loves to sing. You might be learning math at school from a Logic Smart teacher or social studies from a People Smart teacher. You may have a Body Smart friend who juggles, or a Self Smart friend who started her own business. You might see the different intelligences in the

Body Smart bus driver who takes you to school, or the People Smart clerk at the grocery store. Everywhere you turn—at home, in your classroom, or in public—you can see the different smarts at work.

Chances are, though, you can see the different smarts most easily in yourself. After all, who do you spend the most time with? Yourself, of course. If the multiple intelligences aren't obvious to you, that's okay. This book will help you recognize and make the most of them.

Each of us uses all nine intelligences every day, but each of us is unique in how we show our smarts. In a way, it's as if the nine intelligences were different notes of an octave (plus one) on a musical scale: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D. Each one of us is like a different song made up of those nine notes. The way we combine the notes is unique, so no song is exactly the same. When you use all of your intelligences as much as you can—in your own unique way—you will fill the world with a marvelous tune that nobody else can make!

If you'd like to write to me, I'd love to hear from you. Send letters to:

Dr. Thomas Armstrong

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115 Broad Street #548

Cloverdale, CA 95425

Or email me at thomas@institute4learning.com.



Word Smart

QuickQuiz

Do you:

- love to read?
- like to tell stories?
- write stories or poetry?
- enjoy learning foreign languages?
- have a good vocabulary?
- spell well?
- like to write letters or emails?
- enjoy talking about ideas with others?
- have a good memory for names or facts?
- play word games such as word scrambles, hidden word puzzles, Scrabble, or crossword puzzles?
- like to do research and read about ideas that interest you?
- have fun playing with words (puns, tongue twisters, and rhymes)?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, then you just identified some of the ways you're Word Smart!



What Does It Mean to Be Word Smart?

You're Word Smart if you like words and the ways that they can be used in reading, writing, and speaking. You may be sensitive to how words sound, what they mean, and how they are used. You may enjoy playing with words or creating word games. You can show this intelligence by being a good poet or writer, a super speller, a bookworm, an excellent storyteller, a compelling debater, or a whiz at learning languages.

You're already Word Smart whether you realize it or not. By reading this book, even if it's hard for you, you're being Word Smart. When you talk to your family, read the sports page or your favorite comic, or write emails or letters to your friends, you're being Word Smart.

What can being Word Smart do for you?

- You can communicate with others through speaking or writing.
- You can help yourself do well in school. A lot of things you do in school are Word Smart activities—reading, writing, spelling, memorizing facts, making presentations in class, and discussing ideas.
- You can visit new places, meet interesting people, and see mysterious things—all through books.

Everybody is Word Smart. If somebody ever comes up to you and says: “I don't think I'm Word Smart” you can say to them, “In order for you to tell me that, you had to be Word Smart!” (Because the person used words to communicate.)

Things you may do every day that use this intelligence:

tell jokes
 keep a journal
 write poetry and stories
 write and put on skits
 write letters, notes, and emails
 read (books, magazines, blogs, newspapers, and comics)
 speak out for causes you believe in
 listen to talk radio or radio shows and plays
 listen to audiobooks
 watch movies
 tell stories
 rap

The Spoken Word

Being Word Smart is about good communication skills. What's the simplest way to communicate? By speaking and listening, of course. Those are two things that just about everyone everywhere does every day. Speech is a fundamental part of being Word Smart. Why do people speak? They speak to communicate, inspire, persuade, lead, teach, and entertain. That's a whole lot of talking going on!

Think about how often you use speech throughout your day. You talk to your friends at school. You answer questions from your teachers. You may use speech to argue with your brother or sister about all sorts of things—or to teach your younger sister how to do a math problem. You might use speech to convince people to join causes or buy things for school fundraisers. These are all ways of being Word Smart.

You may have difficulty reading or writing but still be very Word Smart in the way that you speak. Many people who've been labeled *dyslexic* or *reading disabled* are actually wonderful storytellers, speakers, actors, comedians, or politicians. Some examples include actors Tom Cruise and Keira Knightley, comedians Whoopi Goldberg and Jay Leno, and singers Cher and John Lennon.

If you're a good speaker (and listener), you may be someone who others turn to when a speech needs to be made. You may be known as a good storyteller or the "class clown." Maybe you shine when doing oral reports. On the other hand, maybe getting up in front of a group of people or raising your hand in class scares you.

If you don't like speaking up, take some comfort from the fact that a lot of other people (grown-ups included) don't like to do it either. So, what's so hard about speaking?



Did You Know?

??

You can have a stutter when you speak, but still be a great speaker, storyteller, or actor. Famous examples include Winston Churchill (leader of Britain during World War II), Emily Blunt (actor, *The Adjustment Bureau*), and James Earl Jones (actor, the voice of Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* movies).

Many people don't like drawing attention to themselves. Or they worry that they will say something stupid.

If you're scared about speaking up in class:

- Do listen to what everyone else is saying in class.
- Do start speaking up more often. Try speaking up a little more each day. You don't have to do it all at once.
- Don't worry about what anyone else thinks when you talk.

If you're scared about an oral report or a presentation:

- Remember to breathe. It sounds obvious, but try it anyway. Breathing helps you calm down.
- Speak loudly, clearly, and slowly. You'll probably want to whisper, mumble, or rush—but if you do, you might have to do the speech over again.
- Practice in front of someone like a good friend or a parent. You'll get used to saying the words aloud and how it feels to make the presentation in front of an audience of one. This will make it easier to stand up in front of a bigger group.
- Highlight the important points in your report, so that you can find them easily when you're talking. If you practice enough, you may find you don't need your notes at all!

Speaking doesn't have to be scary. It can be as fun and simple as telling jokes or stories to your friends.

Telling jokes and stories is a good way to entertain people, but telling stories can also be very important. Storytellers have been valued members



Did You Know?

Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech has been called one of the greatest pieces of *rhetoric*, or convincing speech, in the 20th century. Search for "I Have a Dream" on the Internet to read the speech.

of cultures all over the world. Not only have they entertained their audiences, but they often have been the keepers of history and myth for their cultures. Family histories and religious traditions have been passed along this way for generations.

The Written Word

If you think about it, being able to read is one of the most amazing things in the world. These are just simple marks of ink on a page. How is it that you're able to find meaning in these marks? Look at the word *cat*. It's just three marks on the page, each one shaped in a different way. But when you read these marks, you probably begin to think about your own cat (if you have one) or about other cats that you've known or seen.



How is it that you can imagine all of this from just three simple marks? No one really knows.

Somehow, in ways that scientists still don't fully understand, you're able to look at these marks (and all the other marks on this page) and make sense of their meaning.

The ability to read opens up all kinds of doors into the world of knowledge and imagination. You can be sitting on your couch or at your desk in school and suddenly be transported to ancient Egypt, or to a rocket ship heading into outer space, or to a submarine deep under the sea. Reading a book is like entering a whole other world.

What kind of books do you most enjoy reading? Some people have favorite authors

Did You Know?

??

Scientists tell us that people who use sign language—including the deaf and hearing impaired—are mostly using the Word Smart areas of the brain to communicate.

like R.L. Stine, J.K. Rowling, Walter Dean Myers, or Beverly Cleary and try to read all of their books. Other people favor certain *genres*, or categories of books, like mysteries, science fiction, westerns, romance, poetry, or plays. Some people love to read nonfiction books or magazines about animals, nature, history, cars, or space travel. And still others don't have any particular method for choosing books—they just read whatever they like.

There are different ways of reading books, and this knowledge can help you both inside and outside of school. You can read for pleasure or you can read for content. Sometimes you do both.

Certain things you *have* to read in school, like textbooks, handouts, and stories. Some of this material may really interest you, and some of it might not. When you're not as interested, you probably just want to read to get the information as quickly as you can. For these books and materials, reading for content is the key.

This kind of reading is called “inspectional reading.” It may involve picking out key words and topic sentences (usually the first sentence of a paragraph). You also look at chapter headings and subheadings for other important phrases and pieces of information. Pictures and charts can also help you get at the basic meaning of the text.

Reading can also be a pleasure and a treat. In order to really enjoy a book, try taking your time when you read. Read at your own pace, or even read more slowly and savor the words and the story. Give yourself permission to slow down and listen to the sounds of the words in your head, imagine the scenery, or think about the ideas in the book. Writers usually choose their words very carefully. Their word choices make a character's speech sound more real. Or they can create sound effects on the page (the splash of raindrops, the crackle of a fire, the whoosh of wind).



Did You Know?

Reading for pleasure, or playful reading, is also called “ludic reading.” Ludic (pronounced loo-dik) comes from the Latin word *ludere*, which means to play.

Try reading part of one of your favorite books out loud. What do the characters sound like? Do the words seem more funny or serious when read aloud? Try writing down responses to the story or to something a character says. Maybe you'll get an idea from reading and want to write a story of your own. Or maybe you'll want to draw the character, build a model of someplace in the book, or try acting out a scene. All of these ideas are ways to be Word Smart.



Did You Know?

The Nobel Prize–winning writer Saul Bellow said that he heard whole paragraphs with all the punctuation included! Poet Amy Lowell wrote that she doesn't hear a voice but that she feels a sense of words rather than actually hearing them.

Using Your Words in Writing

The more you read, the more you may want to *write* to tell your own stories and express your own thoughts. People write in different ways. Some people hear what they want to write. Other people see things in their head and write to describe what they see. Some people use their feelings to help them write. Others find stories or poetry in the events and people around them and write about that.

What you may find when you start to write is that you have your own voice—

something that makes the writing uniquely yours. Your voice can emerge whether you write poetry, stories, or even journal entries. This voice will come out of who you are and what you've done.

Don't worry about what your voice sounds like when you write or whether you have one. The most important thing to do when you write is to *write*. It's very easy to get put off of writing if you think that you won't be any good at it—even if it's something you really want to do. It's also very easy to get distracted by other things . . . so stop playing video games or sorting your socks, and try writing instead!

It's okay to write about anything you want—even the first thing that crosses your mind. It doesn't matter if it's skateboarding, your big brother,

math, or chocolate ice cream. Write about a topic for five minutes without stopping. (Don't worry about punctuation or spelling. You can always go back and fix those.)

After the five minutes are up, read what you've written. Some of it may be silly (and you probably stopped writing about chocolate ice cream at some point). But, most likely, there are some interesting words or phrases in your writing. Some of these may become the basis for a poem, story, or essay. This process is called *free writing*. Many writers do this to get started.

In the same way that actors may look at people around them for ideas, writers listen to the people around them. Becoming a better listener may give you ideas for poems or improve the dialogue (speech) in your stories. If you want to write but are really stuck for something to start writing about, lots of books have jumping-off points you can use.

Other Ways of Being Word Smart

As you can see, there are many ways to be Word Smart. You might show it by being a super speller or by having great grammar when you write. Or maybe spelling and grammar aren't your strong points, but you're able to write really creative stories with beautiful images in them.

You may love writing poetry but not enjoy writing book reports. You might like writing essays but not stories. You may enjoy practicing your handwriting, without paying much attention to the actual words you write. You may love writing, but not enjoy reading. Being Word Smart doesn't mean you have to love *every* aspect of words and their different uses. Each person is Word Smart in his or her own unique way.

For example, you might be Word Smart through a love of single words. Maybe you like to collect favorite words, or look up words that you don't already know, or



Did You Know?

The most widely published mystery writer in the world—Agatha Christie—had problems with her spelling and grammar. Over 2 billion of her mystery books are in print all over the world!

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What's the longest word in the dictionary? It depends on how you look at it. One dictionary lists *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* (from *Mary Poppins*). If you are willing to add diseases, then *pneumoultramicroscopic silicovolcanoconiosis* is the longest word. But if you count place names, then *Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogogoch* (the name of a village in Wales) is the longest word in the dictionary.

impress people with your knowledge of very long words. If any of these sound like you, then you could try some “word archeology.”

You can “dig up” strange and difficult words to find out where they came from and how they've been used over the years. The longest and best dictionary for English is the *Oxford English Dictionary* or the *OED*. Because it's so big, the best place to find it is at the library. It includes just about all the words used in English. It gives a history for each word and explains its origins in other languages and how it developed step-by-step over time. The *OED* also gives examples of how word meanings (and spellings) change over the centuries.

Word archeology is fun and so is playing with the sounds of words. You could try tongue twisters, riddles, puns, or rhymes. Read nonsense poetry out loud or write your own. Try making up words that sound like what they represent—this is called *onomatopoeia*. You could even make up a secret language with your friends using words or hand gestures that only you understand!

Words can be fun—more than just vocabulary lists, spelling tests, or book reports that you have to do. Becoming more Word Smart doesn't have to be a chore. It can be a huge adventure.



Fun Ways to Become More Word Smart

Here are some ways that you can expand and enjoy your Word Smart skills. Try *any* activity that appeals to you no matter how Word Smart you think you are.

- 1 **Write down your ideas as you get them.** Keep a little notebook or file on a tablet or smartphone (or miniature recorder) handy for putting down ideas that occur to you during the day.
- 2 **Read about what interests you.** Anything is fair game and everything counts: car magazines, art books, newspapers, science journals, comics, and more.
- 3 **Start a journal.** Write at least 250 words a day on any subject that you'd like. Write about your day, what you did in school, a book you're reading, what's happening in the world, or anything else that interests you.
- 4 **Start going to the library.** You can find a world of books and audio recordings there and they can be all yours—for free! All you have to do is sign up for a card. Librarians can help you find books on topics that interest you and recommend authors that you'd like. They can also make suggestions about audiobooks you might enjoy.
- 5 **Look up words that you don't know in a dictionary.** Keep a list of words you come across that you don't know. If you keep doing this, you'll find that your vocabulary has gotten huge without your even noticing it!
- 6 **Have a regular storytelling time with your family.** The stories can be about anything you'd like: make up your own stories, retell favorite parts of books you've read and liked, or tell family stories.
- 7 **Play with words.** Do Mad Libs, crossword puzzles, Acrostics, find-a-words, anagrams, or other word puzzles that interest you. (Many daily newspapers have word games in their comics or entertainment sections or you can find word games online.) Get together with friends and family to play games like Scrabble, Hangman, Anagrams, or Password.