

In the 1980s psychologist and education professor Howard Gardner proposed the theory of multiple intelligences. This theory addresses the ways a person gathers information and processes it in order to learn it. Gardner's theory reinforced teachers' observations about their students' learning experiences and created a framework for teaching in the modern education system.

Gardner's theory supports the idea that intelligence develops and functions uniquely in individuals. It is not a "thing" like blue eyes or red hair that is passed down from one generation to the next, and it is not something that can be improved or enhanced by a single academic act. Rather, the theory of multiple intelligences puts forth the idea that an individual's ability to process information in order to solve problems and accomplish goals – the basic tenet of learning – is rooted in the individual's physical and psychological makeup. Hence, a person who is a "visual learner" will learn more readily by viewing a concept presented in charts and images than he will learn by listening to someone explain the concept in words. A person who "learns by doing" is more likely to understand how to build a bookshelf by holding the pieces in his hands and putting them together than he is by reading and interpreting the printed instructions. Gardner's initial theory of multiple intelligences included seven mechanisms:

- Linguistic/verbal intelligence
- Logical/mathematical intelligence
- Musical/rhythmic intelligence
- Bodily/kinetic intelligence
- Visual/spatial intelligence
- Interpersonal intelligence
- Intrapersonal intelligence

Gardner also indicated that more than one type of intelligence could function at the same time to help a person process information. For example, a person who has a job in retail sales or marketing may have to call on his or her linguistic intelligence to memorize pricing information and his or her visual/spatial intelligence in order to understand which items correlate to the various prices.

As a student of English composition, you will be faced with challenges and tasks to think critically, interpret, and analyze ideas and information; document data; write papers; construct presentations; and meet assignment deadlines and expectations. If we use Gardner's theory as a model, we can safely state that these challenges and tasks are problems you will need to solve and goals you will need to accomplish in order to learn English composition. If you have at the

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outset a solid understanding of how you learn, you will be better able to develop the skills you need. You will learn more efficiently and effectively if you understand how to utilize your mind and body to best advantage.

Presented in this self-quiz are brief explanations of the different types of intelligences identified in Gardner's theory. As you read, think about learning experiences you have had during the past year. Think of the activities you undertook that helped you to learn a new concept or new information. Make a note of significant learning experiences beneath the description that most directly applies. When you think about the way you have learned since you were a child, do any obvious learning patterns emerge? If so, what are they? Please take a few minutes to answer the questions at the end of the list. Your new awareness of your own intelligences will help you as you continue to study.

Self-Quiz: How Do You Learn?

As you read through the description of each intelligence, ask yourself whether you utilize the intelligence as you learn. You may use more than one type of intelligence. Jot down any recollections you may have about learning experiences relating to a specific type of intelligence.

LINGUISTIC/VERBAL INTELLIGENCE – sensitivity to spoken and written language. A person who utilizes this form of intelligence uses language effectively, uses language to remember information, learns other languages with relative ease, and uses language to accomplish tasks and goals.

LOGICAL/MATHEMATICAL INTELLIGENCE – sensitivity to mathematical processes, logical analysis, and interpretation. A person with logical/mathematical intelligence can detect patterns, use deductive reasoning, and relate to logical scientific and mathematical experiences.

MUSICAL/RHYTHMIC INTELLIGENCE – sensitivity to rhythmic patterns. A person with musical intelligence can detect musical rhythms, tones, and pitches, and compose and perform the rhythms with ease.

BODILY/KINETIC INTELLIGENCE – sensitivity to the use of the body or its parts to solve problems and accomplish tasks. This bodily activity is tied directly to the mind’s ability to coordinate movement related to the task.

VISUAL/SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE – skill relating to the awareness of patterns in shapes, dimensions, and sizes. This type of intelligence recognizes and utilizes shapes and forms to solve problems and accomplish tasks.

INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE – sensitivity to the behaviors, intentions, motivations, and goals of others as a way to solve problems and accomplish tasks. A person who utilizes interpersonal intelligence identifies others’ actions in order to coordinate or manage the actions.

INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE – an introspective sensitivity toward one’s own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in an effort to understand the self.

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List some of the learning experiences you have had during the past year. How was information presented to you in those situations that made it possible for you to understand the concept or information?

Can you think of other experiences in which you learned in a unique way?

As you reviewed the items in this self-quiz, did you determine which type(s) of intelligence applies(y) to you? Which? Why?
