

## 8 Intelligences: Jack of All Trades or A Master of One?



<https://ed.ted.com/on/zi3gd419>

Currently I think there are eight intelligences that I'm very confident about and a few

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more that I've been thinking about. I'll share that with our audience. The first two

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intelligences are the ones which IQ tests and other kind of standardized tests valorize

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and as long as we know there are only two out of eight it's perfectly fine to look

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at them. Linguistic intelligence is how well you're able to use language. It's a kind

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of skill that poets have, other kinds of writers, journalists tend to have linguistic intelligence,

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orators. The second intelligence is logical mathematical intelligence. As the name implies

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logicians, mathematicians, scientists have that kind of intelligence. They're able

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to do mathematical proofs. They're able to do scientific reasoning and experimentation.

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And it's great to have language and logical intelligence because most tests really focus

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on that. And if you do well in those tests as long as you stay in school you think you're

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smart. But if you ever walk out into Broadway or the highway or into the woods or into a

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farm you then find out that other intelligences are at least this important. So the third

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intelligence is musical intelligence and that's the capacity to appreciate different kinds

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of musics, to produce the music by voice or by an instrument or to conduct music.

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And people say well music is a talent. It's not an intelligence. And I say well why if

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you're good with words is that an intelligence but if you're good with tones and rhythms

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and timbres nobody's ever given me a good answer which is why it makes sense to talk

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about musical intelligence. And at certain cultures over history musical intelligence

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has been very important. The fourth intelligence is spatial intelligence. That's the intelligence

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which allows us to handle and work in space that's close by. A chess player would have

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spatial intelligence. A surgeon would have spatial intelligence. But there's another

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variety of spatial intelligence which we use for a much broader navigation. That's what

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an airplane pilot or a sea captain would have. How do you find your way around large territory

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and large space. Similarly with the fifth intelligence bodily kinesthetic intelligence

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it comes in two flavors. One flavor is the ability to use your whole body to solve problems

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or to make things. And athletes and dancers would have that kind of bodily kinesthetic

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intelligence. But another variety is being able to use your hands or other parts of your

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body to solve problems or make things. A craft person would have bodily kinesthetic intelligence

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even if they weren't particularly a good athlete or dancer.

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The sixth intelligence and seventh intelligence have to do with human beings.  
Interpersonal

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intelligence is how you understand other people, how you motivate them, how you lead them,

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how you work with them, how you cooperate with them. Anybody at any workplace with other

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people needs interpersonal intelligence. Leaders hopefully have a lot of interpersonal intelligence.

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But any intelligence can be used in a pernicious way so the salesman that sells you something

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you don't want for a price you don't want to pay, he or she has got interpersonal intelligence.

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It's just not being used in a way that we might prefer. The seventh kind of intelligence

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is difficult to assess but it's very important. It's intrapersonal intelligence. It's

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the understanding yourself. If we go back a way in history and prehistory knowledge

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of yourself probably wasn't that important because people did what their parents or grandparents

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did whether they were hunters or fisherman or craftspeople. But nowadays especially in

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developed society people lead their own lives. We follow our own careers. We often switch

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careers. We don't necessarily live at home as we get older. And if you don't have a

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good understanding of yourself you are in big trouble.

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So that's intrapersonal intelligence. The eighth intelligence which I added some years

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ago is the naturalist intelligence. And that's the capacity to make important relevant discriminations

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in the world of nature between one plant and another, between one animal and another. It's

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the intelligence of the naturalist, the intelligence of Charles Darwin. I missed it the first go

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around when I wrote about it but I tried to atone by adding it to my list. And by the

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way you might say well but nature isn't so important anymore. But in fact everything

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we do in the commercial world uses our naturalist intelligence. Why do I buy this jacket rather

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than another one? This sweater rather than another one? One hair style rather than another?

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Those all make just the naturalist intelligence because the brain is very adaptive. And when

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an old use of a brain center no longer is relevant it gets hijacked for something new.

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So we're all using our naturalist intelligence even if we never walk out into the woods or

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into the savannah of East Asia. The two other intelligences which I'm interested in, one

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of them is called the teaching or pedagogical intelligence. The intelligence which allows

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us to be able to teach successfully to other people. Now you could have two people who

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have exactly the same expertise and knowledge in the field but one is a very good teacher

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and the other isn't. That probably doesn't surprise individuals so much. But what got

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me fascinated was as young as two or three kids already know how to teach. Now what does

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that mean? You show a child how to do something let's

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say a three or four year old and then you ask the child to explain it to an older person

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or to a younger person. And even the three or four year old will explain it very differently

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to a young person, will go through details, point things and speak slowly. And with an

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older person it would be much more elliptical and say well you do this and that and then

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you can figure it out. So that shows as young as three let's say we already have teaching

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intelligence. The other one is one which I think is going to be difficult to prove to

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a skeptic but I call it existential intelligence. And existential intelligence is the intelligence

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of big questions. Philosophical questions, artistic questions. What does it mean to love?

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Why do we die? What's going to be in the future? My pet bird might have more musical

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intelligence. The rats who are scurrying around the floor might have more spatial intelligence.

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But no other animals have existential intelligence. Part of the human condition is to think about

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questions of existence. And I like to say every five year old has existential intelligence

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because five year old are always asking why this, why that.

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But the difference between a five year old and a philosopher is the five year old doesn't

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pay too much attention to the answer whereas philosophers and other people who develop

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existential intelligence are really very interested in how we attack questions like that. So again

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where there's eight intelligences or ten or twelve is less important to me than having

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broken the monopoly of a single intelligence which sort of labels you for all time.

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I think if we lived forever we could probably develop each intelligence to a very high degree.

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But life is very short and if you devote too much attention to one intelligence you're

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not going to have much time to work on other kinds of intelligences. And so the big question

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is should you play to strength or should you bolster weakness? And that's a value judgment.

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Scientists cannot give you an answer to that. If, for example, you want to be a jack of

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all trades and be very well rounded then probably you're going to want to nurture the intelligences

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which aren't that strong. If on the other hand you're dead set on really coming to

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the top of some particular heap then you're probably going to find the intelligences that

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you're strongest at and really push those. And, you know, if a parent came to me and

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said well should we supplement or should we accentuate I would say well tell me what you

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would like your child to do. Or better let the child tell you what he or she wants to

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do rather than say well science says you should do one or the other. I think it's a question

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of values, not of science.

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Some people think there's such a thing as humor intelligence. But, in fact, I don't. I think humor intelligence is simply the operation

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of a logical intelligence in some realm like human nature or physical nature or the workplace.

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And what happens is in humor there's a certain expectation and you flip that expectation

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so it's logic but it's logic that's played out in different kinds of ways. People

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had mentioned there's such a thing as a cooking intelligence, a humor intelligence

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and a sexual intelligence. And I quipped well that can't be intelligences because I don't

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have any of them.

(\*Auto-generated by YouTube.)