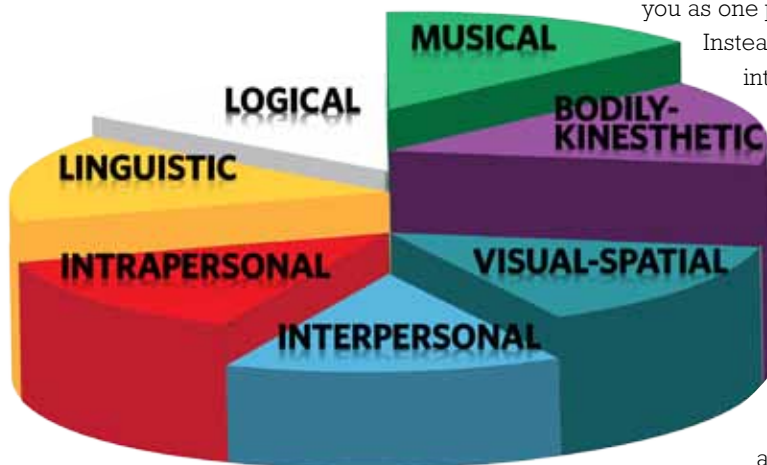


Your Slice of the M.I. Pie

As a gifted student, you already know you're smart. But do you know in which ways you are intelligent?

Let's say your Language Arts teacher allows you to choose how to show what you know about S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*. A light bulb goes off over your head as you decide to recruit a few friends to do a scene study of the drive-in scene with Ponyboy and Cherry. Across the room, another light bulb goes off as another student decides to draw a map of Ponyboy's journey, including an eagle's-eye view of his train ride to Jay Mountain. Another student decides to draw a picture of a Greaser and a Soc, labeling their clothes and features to identify what externally makes them who they are. These tendencies to produce different kinds of projects reflect different intelligence categories.

In 1983, Howard Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University, proposed his theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI). These categories are usually represented in a pie chart like the one below. The slices represent aptitudes that come naturally to some, and not so naturally to others:



- › **Linguistic**—using language (words, writing)
- › **Logical**—using science and math (numbers)
- › **Musical**—using tone and rhythm
- › **Bodily-Kinesthetic**—using sports and movement
- › **Visual-Spatial**—using art, design, and shapes
- › **Interpersonal**—using the ability to communicate well with other people
- › **Intrapersonal**—using a deep understanding of yourself, being reflective
- › **Naturalistic**—using your knowledge and appreciation of nature and the world beyond you

The MI theory has been adopted by many teachers as a means to get to know their students. After administering an MI quiz, teachers develop lesson plans reflecting the different slices of the MI pie, and the varied learners, in their classroom. Some students also take the quiz on their own as a way to discover more about what makes them tick academically.

MI quizzes are not designed to define you as one particular kind of learner.

Instead, you'll discover how intelligent you are in each area. You might learn that your strengths lie mainly in one area, or in a few areas.

Some educators think we should know our MI category in order to best demonstrate our knowledge—by choosing a project, for example, or

a class that emphasizes our strength. Others stress that knowing our MI category will help us develop the most effective studying strategies. For instance, if you're a predominantly Visual-Spatial learner, using icons or symbols when taking notes might help you absorb information better when you're studying.

But I say that the most important reason to know your MI strengths is so you can challenge yourself to leave your comfort zone. There's a danger in settling into your innate intelligence category. It's like going to the gym and building up only your left bicep. If you don't exercise your whole body, you'll never find out what it can do. You may be a naturally Musical person, but you might learn a greater lesson by challenging yourself to develop a project as an Interpersonal or Visual learner might. You'll also be more prepared when that type of mandatory assignment comes your way.

Your future in high school and college will be rich with friends and classmates who share your intellectual curiosity, but who might be very diverse learners. By tapping into your little used skills, you'll broaden not just your academic world, but possibly your social one as well.

So take the quiz at www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-learning-styles-quiz. What MI category best represents you? What slice will you challenge yourself to try next? [i](#)



Heather Wolpert-Gawron teaches seventh and eighth grades at Jefferson Middle School in San Gabriel, CA. She blogs about education policy and curriculum on her website (tweenteacher.com) and at Edutopia.org.