

Know Your Child's IQ



Hans Eysenck & Darrin Evans, Mind Games, 1995

reviewed by Chris N French

This book is aimed at parents with bright children aged from 10 to 15 years of age. It may well also be of interest to those with very bright *younger* children, but the authors point out that they were unable to find a reliable IQ value for any given score for these. The tests are geared to aspirants of above average ability, targeting the 100 to 150 IQ group only, with floors ranging from 83 to 109 and ceilings from 140 to 160². Professor Eysenck first staked a claim in this area when he wrote the very successful paperback *Know Your Own IQ*.

I have always been surprised by the relatively small number of NAGC parents who have had their children formally assessed. This is not to say that they do not have firm evidence that their progeny are of exceptional ability but often they do not take the logical step of asking a psychologist to measure their IQ.

¹On most (*not all*) IQ tests, people in the top two per cent have IQs of 131 or more.

top proportion	IQ range
10%	119+
	125+
2%	131+
1%	135+
1 in 1,000	146+
1 in 10,000	156+
1 in 100,000	164+

This assumes IQ test with standard deviation of 15. Note, many IQ tests have relatively low ceilings and do not aim to discriminate at high levels. Also some people will argue that very high IQ scores are often highly dubious - particularly if reported in the media!

One reason for this could be the cost. This book may be of interest to such parents as it retails for just £9.95. Clearly, as the authors point out, the results of their tests will never be as accurate (*valid or reliable*) as those provided by professional testing and, further, the results will not furnish comparable detail. Most tests give two main IQ scores - for example, spatial and verbal - along with a number of sub-scores.

Despite this, the book can be thoroughly recommended - at least to those who haven't already decided that IQs are a waste of time! It would be too much to expect a work of this type to provide measures of the tests' reliability - confidence limits and the like - which indicate precisely how much trust you can place in the scores. And, no doubt, there will be those who would argue that the tests will not tell you anything a good teacher can do for free! However, such testing does have clear advantages over subjective assessments. The IQ test has no axe to grind and (*leaving aside the question of cultural bias*) is likely to be impartial in its measurements.

Using this book you come away with just one IQ measure, but 8 tests are provided to increase the reliance you can place on the results over time. As well as instructions, the book includes a modest but largely sensible introduction to IQ. Success, whether it be in one's personal life, education or work, is dependent upon far more than just IQ - personality, temperament, luck and so on. And these days perhaps a third of one's IQ can be attributed to nurture with two thirds determined by nature (genes).

The book also gives the parent and child an opportunity to see at first hand how practice will lead to modest but significant improvements in obtained IQ scores.

Our family's sample of two (*a ten and twelve year old*) is of course too small for drawing any radical conclusions. As it happens, the children's results were not too dissimilar from those obtained from professional testings.

Less than £10 is a small price to pay to settle one's curiosity - particularly if you feel that a child's abilities have not been recognised by a school. The results could well indicate whether a more precise professional assessment is warranted and indeed such testing would be essential to establish the *pattern* of abilities. If the local authority is unwilling or dilatory in providing professional testing, the local association may be able to provide the name of a qualified educational psychologist who would be willing to assess a child privately. Alternatively, one can consult the British Psychological Society (*phone 0116 254 9568*) or their Register of Chartered Psychologists.

Some people consider that IQ tests take too narrow a view of people's talents. Such people will need to look elsewhere if they want to *prove* that their children have exceptional gifts.

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This book review and comment on IQ was published in the 1996 Newsletter of the Great Manchester & Cheshire Branch of The National Association for Gifted Children.