

TIA

Trend Forecast: Mental Gymnastics

Train the Brain through Play By Reyne Rice, Toy Trend Specialist, Toy Industry Association, USA recent research about how people learn and play

Why is it that some of us love playing numbers games like Sudoku, or word games like Scrabble, while others seem to gravitate towards drawing games such as Pictionary? The answer may lie within the type of stimulus that we, as individuals, are most comfortable in using, and how we approach everyday learning and living.

Recent research on how people learn and play was conducted by Howard Gardner, John H. and Elisabeth A. Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who has identified seven types of intelligence - four more than those traits commonly measured in standard intelligence tests**. Following is a description:

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| <p>1) Linguistic intelligence: Employing the use of word games, tongue twisters, word scrambles, crossword puzzles, vocabulary building, and language arts.</p> <p>2) Logic/Math intelligence: Applying numbers, logic sequencing, numerical patterns, cause & effect, rationale, analytical skills, mental processing, and critical thinking.</p> <p>3) Spatial and 3D learning: Incorporating visual stimulants such as mental images and conceptualization, pictures, photos, graphics and visual arts. Using visual recognition and visual mapping techniques, and various 3-dimensional models in virtual or physical space, to aid understanding.</p> <p>4) Musical intelligence: Grasping and producing rhythm and melody, determining distinctions between tones and musical pat-</p> | <p>terns, recognizing cadence and musical scales, and tapping into right-brain learning with sounds and sound patterns.</p> <p>5) Bodily/Kinesthetic learners: Understanding how hands-on learners process information involves measuring agility and dexterity, reflexes and reactions to physical stimuli. This learner commonly uses model building and construction, exercise and active components to stimulate and develop intelligence.</p> <p>6) Intra-personal intelligence: Using self reflection, self-discipline, (self-actualization), and identifying feelings and emotions. Often this intelligence mode applies goal-setting, (improving personal best) as a tool.</p> <p>7) Inter-personal skills: Working with others, fostering teamwork, recognizing and reading the moods & needs of others, and the use of outward-focused tools.</p> |
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Cross training the brain by using a variety of intellectual skills through play challenges a wider array of neurons, and keeps the mind active and alert.

All of these activities require an increased level of concentration, and suggest a different approach to learning. Regular use of brain-teasing activities is generally considered a reliable method for improving mental abilities and memory capacity for all age groups. Cross-training the brain by using a variety of intellectual skills,, challenges a wider array of neurons, and keeps the mind both active and alert.

Here are just some of the creative new ways in which the toys and games industry has applied Gardner’s intelligence theory:

LANGUAGE-BUILDERS

Help increase vocabulary, improve verbal skills and storytelling as tools to build fluency. Examples include:

- Verbal skills: Storytelling Cube Puzzle (iToys), Snipe It (Imagination Games), Brian the Brain (MegaBrands), M is For Mouse (Playroom Entertainment), StoryTellers (Live Oak Games), Language Lab Laptop(V-Tech).
- Written skills: Baseball Scrabble (Sababa), Illuminated W.O.R.D (TechnoSource), Scrabble Express (Hasbro Games), WordSweep (IntellInitiative), Backwords (Imagination Games), Nerdy Wordy (Briarpatch), Hooked on Phonics Word Master (Zizzle).
- Non-verbal communication skills: V-Smile Baby Infant Development System with Baby sign language cues(V-Tech), Baby Sign Language Learning Keys (Lamaze, RC2).

NUMBER GAMES AND MATH CHALLENGES

New brain-teaser math games offer electronic hand held, plug ‘n’ play or DVD game options, as well as traditional hands-on problem solving puzzles and board game play. Some manufacturers include:

- Games involving problem-solving: Treasure Chest, Hot Spot, (ThinkFun), Newton’s Apple (Briarpatch), CSI Senses (bEQUAL/ Fun Brandz) XIG The Four Elements, XIG Sorcerers Sword (GT2 Fun & Games,) Tetris Cube, Mind Twist (Imagination Games), Bananagrams (Bananagrams), Farkle dice game (Patch Products), No Brainer (Hasbro Games).
- Handheld Brain games: Brain Games (Radica/Mattel), My-Q Brain Camp (Hasbro Games), Big Brain Academy: Wii Degree (Nintendo), Nintendo DS Big Brain Academy and Brain Age (Nintendo).
- Kids’ Games: Bendomino Kids (Blue Orange Games), Sharp Cookie (Jakks Pacific), Puzzles Plus Seek N Find Games (Cranium), Whiz Kids (V-Tech), My First Computer Quickstart (LeapFrog), Nacho Loco (Buffalo Games), Number Chase (PlayRoom Entertainment).

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND 3-D GAMES

Opening up the world of gaming and playing with 3-D models and building upwards from a two dimensional plane offers a new and exciting perspective.

- Games with a Rubik's familiarity, but with a new twist: Electronic Rubik's Revolution (Technosource), K-ball (EduScience), KO Labyrinth (CHH Quality Products, Inc), Rubik's Brain Racker, Rubik's Ice Cube (Winning Moves), Gordians Knot (ThinkFun).
- 3-D Puzzles and Games: I Spy 3-D Seeing Double Game, (Briarpatch), Triple Triumph and Jam Pack Jam (Cranium), Scooby Doo 3-D game (Pressman), Cosmic Cows (Playroom Entertainment), Squint and Squint, Jr. (Out-of-the Box Games), Doodle Dice (Jax Games, Ltd), Pieceless Puzzle (Gamewright/Ceaco),
- Visionary Tools: Color Explosion and Color Wonder (Crayola), AquaDots (Spin Master), ColorStart artist tools to fit toddler hands (RoseArt/MegaBrands). Rainbow Rake and SideWalk Paint Sprayer (Crayola), Digital Art Studio (Fisher- Price).

MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE

Popular music defines generations of listeners, and the jingles and music associated with products, celebrities, entertainment and advertising can also evoke memories and connections, making music trivia games ideal for multiple generations of players.

- Games involving a knowledge of music and an ear for recognition: Electronic Catch Phrase, Music Edition (Hasbro Games), iList Music Party (Hasbro Games), Encore (Endless Games), Name That Tune (Imagination Games).
- Guitar Heroes: An array of guitar skills games and programs were introduced this year, following the enormous popularity of teen and adult Guitar Hero I and II video games by Red Octane. These include: Power Tour Electric Guitar (Hasbro/Tiger Electronics), Can You Play Guitar (Fisher-Price), Hannah Montana Guitar (CDI, Jakks Pacific), High School Musical Jammin Guitar (Zizzle), Barney's Guitar (Jakks Pacific) Wham-Jam Guitar Frenzy (Summit Toys), Barbie "Jam With Me" Electronic Guitar (Kid Design), LightSnake Guitar learning for either electric or acoustic guitars (United Music Group), even Mini Guitars: MiJam Guitars by B2 (Blue Box).

BODY/KINESTHETIC LEARNING

Using active play to improve hand eye coordination, encourage balance and improve dexterity is part of the active engagement involved in this learning mode.

- Encourage Balance and testing your skills: RipStick 2-wheeled skateboard (Razor),3-D Foosball Table (Zocker Toys). Hot Wheels Racing Timer (Mattel) Nerf Disc Shot (Hasbro) Sit To Stand Dancing Tower (V-Tech), Flippin Frogs Game (Mattel Games).
- Games and activities that encourage movement: HyperDash (Wild Planet), Step 2 It Game (Gamewright/Ceaco), Smart Cycle exercise cycle for kids (Fisher-Price/Mattel), Rokenbok, and Rokenbok Jr. remote control construction playsets (Rokenbok).

INTRA-PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Looking inward helps develop a greater sense of self and confidence. Identifying and measuring your own self-esteem and taking stock of your values and personal style are all a part of this development.

- Quiz and personality games: e-Fortune (Senario Entertainment), Electronic Destiny (Bandai America), What's Your Destiny? (Wild Planet), Tamagotchi Electronic Grow Your Pet Game (Pressman), Tamagotchi Connection 4 (Bandai). Me2 (iToys) doubles as a kid pedometer and a healthy lifestyle tracker, rewarding healthy kids with points for game play. Helps kids to understand that tracking and monitoring their behavior is a healthy approach to building positive, life-long habits.
- Trying on different roles and engaging in what-if scenarios: Moods (Hasbro Games), Imaginiff (Buffalo Games), Your Best Life Now (Endless Games), The Game of Life Twists and Turns (Hasbro Games), Happy or sad ... How do you show feelings? (Gefuhle / Kosmos Verlag).

INTER-PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Fun, social gaming situations are great ways to reconnect and bond with friends and family while pitting teams against each other promotes healthy competition and teaches valuable life lessons. New 2007 launches in this area include:

- Social Gaming and Group Games: Wow (Cranium), Scramble (Radica/Mattel), Squabble (Screenlife/Mattel), Matchmate (Pressman), Shrek Swamp Party DVD Game (bEQUAL/FunBrandz), Hit or Miss (Gamewright), Squeeze Play (Endless Games), and many, many more.

Many of the companies mentioned in this report exhibit and launch new products at TIA's annual international Toy Fair – American International Toy Fair - which is timed to bookend the product development and buying cycle of the global toy industry. The US toy accounts for 1/3 of global sales and TIA's US shows are the essential showcases for this stakeholder market.

The **American International Toy Fair (February 17-20, 2008, Javits Convention Center, NYC)** is the largest show of its kind in the Western Hemisphere attracting 20,000 attendees from 94 countries, who travel to NY to confirm orders, supplement seasonal selections with additional products, network with toy veterans, mavericks and newcomers and of course spot trends as they walk the aisles. For further information visit, www.toyfairny.com.

Reyne Rice is a seasoned toy industry professional with over 25 years experience in marketing, researching and analyzing the toy industry. She has an encyclopedic knowledge of toy products and works with the Toy Industry Association as their Toy Trend Specialist. Attending TIA's two international shows – Fall Toy Preview and American International Toy Fair - is a MUST for Reyne as these annual showcases provide a unique opportunity to view new products up to 12 months in advance of their launch to the consumer. By proactively attending these shows, networking with members of the toy community and walking the show floor, Reyne is able to identify emerging and forward thinking trends, which she then places in a socioeconomic context, thus giving the toy industry an invaluable insight and focus on potential retail opportunities.

1 From Howard Gardner's "Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century," Basic Books, 1999. For more information visit www.howardgardner.com. Copyright © 2006, Howard Gardner, All rights reserved.