



EYEGLASS
SEDATE
FLORIDA

Memory Splat Mat

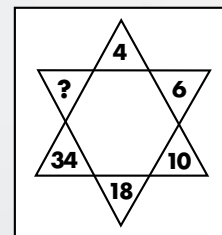
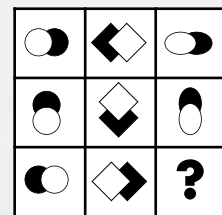
by ALICE FLAHERTY

WHEN TO TAKE THIS TEST: People who eat breakfast score higher on memory tests than those who skip the morning meal, so what better time to test your wits?

WHAT THIS TEST DOES: Tells you which of the three Ds is causing your poor memory: dementia, depression, or... congenitally low IQ. Anxiety can be lumped with depression.

WHAT YOU NEED: Your napkin and a pencil for recording answers. Don't write on this splat mat, because if you really have lost your memory, you'll want to refer to the mat again and again.

Before you begin, look at the three words in the coffee stain to the left for five seconds. Then cover them with your cereal bowl and take the rest of the test.



- How old are you?
- In 60 seconds, name all the animals you can think of.
- Name the object in each of the pictures to the right.
- What do those pictures have in common?
- Define ibis, ibex, and imbrolio.
- Who notices your memory lapses more often—you, or others, such as your spouse or boss?
- Name the seven dwarfs in Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. (Skip this question if you weren't born in the United States.)
- Do you have more trouble starting projects than you did three years ago?
- Have you recently lost interest in things you used to enjoy, such as sex or television?
- Does a word you were groping for come back spontaneously later?
- Remember this: "Frank Jones's feet were so big, he had to put his pants on over his head."
- Without moving your cereal bowl, write down the three words that it covers.
- Do you have more trouble making decisions than you did three years ago?
- Complete the pattern in each series in the two figures to the left.

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ANSWERS

A. The Theory Behind It All

People with dementia are less aware than others that their memory is impaired—and worry less about it. Depression and anxiety cause more trouble with memory recall than with encoding, so memory problems provide good diagnostic clues for both. Memory loss from depression stems from diversion of attentional resources to managing the illness. It is reversible.

B. Scoring

Points are divided into three categories:

B = baseline low intelligence; D = depressed; S = senile

- Age: 1 D point if younger than 55, 1 S point if you're not sure.
- Verbal fluency: If fewer than six animals, 2 S points; if between six and twelve animals, 1 S point.
- Wig, worm, wheelchair. 1 S point for each error.
- Their names all start with "w." If your first thought was that they all have to do with aging and death, get 1 D point.
- Roughly, a bird, a gazelle, a mess. If you didn't have any idea about any of them, get 1 B point. Word recognition is preserved in early dementia.
- If you notice and worry more about your lapses, 1 D point. If others do, 1 S point. Most people who are anxious about their memory do not have dementia.
- Happy, Grumpy, Sleepy, Sneezzy, Bashful, Doc, and Dopey. If you named fewer than 3, get 1 S point. Sleazy was not a dwarf.
- If yes, 1 D point. People with mild dementia can start projects unless they're also apathetic; then they don't notice anyway.
- If yes, 1 D point.
- If yes, 1 D point.
- The story was "Frank Jones's feet were so big, he had to put his pants on over his head." Forgetting the name is fine. If you didn't remember the story at all, 1 S point. If you didn't understand why it was funny, 1 B point. If you understand why someone like me might think it was funny, but you didn't have even the tiniest urge to laugh, 1 D point.
- If you completely blanked on one, try these prompts: (1) related to vision; (2) means calm, sort of; (3) a state. Now check the answers. If you forgot one or more, but remembered with a prompt, 1 D point. If the prompts didn't help, 1 S point.
- If yes, 1 D point.
- Star = 66; grid = . For each error, 1 B point.

C. More Scoring

- If you keep having to look back to remind yourself what B, D, and S stand for, that's bad but non-specific—add a point to all three categories.
- Write your scores here: B ___ D ___ S ___. If you see other scores already there, and they look like they're in your handwriting, add one S point—you've forgotten you took the test already.
- If your S score is greater than 4, you'll be tempted to do memory-enhancing puzzles such as crosswords. But it turns out that normal social interaction, especially gossip, broadly stimulates cognition as much as—or perhaps more than—Sudoku and word-find puzzles can.
- If your D score is greater than 4, see a doctor. Remember that "appropriate" depression or anxiety is still depression or anxiety, still weighs you down, and is treatable.

D. Questions that Don't Appear on the Exam

- Do you forget people's names? Everyone forgets names. The human brain evolved in Neolithic communities that tended to include fewer than 150 people. Now, how does that compare with the number of people in your address book? You do the math.
- Do you forget where you left your keys? Sure, it's bad, but it's very nonspecific. The most common cause of forgetting your keys is that you have something more important to worry about. Highly successful people forget them all the time; that's why they have personal assistants.
- How reliable is this test? It's approximately 60 percent more reliable than those *Cosmo* test-your-sex-quotient quizzes.