# BECOME SMARTER

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# Table of Contents

* [How to read this book](#How_to_read)
* [Notes about the 1st Kindle edition](#notes_kindle)
* [Cautionary statement](#Cautionary_statement)
* [Twelve things this book can help you achieve](#Twelve_things_that)
* [CHAPTER 1: Mental clarity](#CHAPTER_1)
* [CHAPTER 2: Sleep management](#CHAPTER_2)
* [CHAPTER 3: Attention control, or the ability to concentrate](#CHAPTER_3)
* [CHAPTER 4: Emotional intelligence](#CHAPTER_4)
* [CHAPTER 5: Reading and writing performance](#CHAPTER_5)
* [CHAPTER 6: Social intelligence](#CHAPTER_6)
* CHAPTER 7: Six things you should not do with your money
* [Appendices](#Appendices)

# How to read this book

You can read this ebook for free and you will have to pay only if you enjoy the book. To pay go to:  
  
<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0032JT11K>

This book is a shorter and less technical version of the book “How to Become Smarter.” The present book is easier to read, but it contains almost no theory and no supporting evidence, which readers can find in the bigger book. Literary references make it difficult to use the text-to-speech function of Kindle devices; therefore, the present book contains no references (you can find them in “How to Become Smarter”).

# Cautionary statement

Many claims in this book are based on the author’s personal experience (a healthy subject). About half of the proposed methods are supported by scientific studies. The advice offered is not meant to replace the recommendations and advice of a physician. Nursing mothers, pregnant women, and people who are taking medication or have a chronic medical condition should consult their physician or a qualified health care professional before trying any of the lifestyle changes described in this book.

# Twelve things this book can help you achieve

1. Increase your score on general aptitude or intelligence tests.
2. Understand and learn complex reading material that is uninteresting to you (but necessary for your job or school).
3. Concentrate on job- or school-related reading and writing tasks for hours at a time.
4. Reduce procrastination and overcome writer’s block.
5. Improve academic performance if you are a student or job performance if you are a knowledge worker.
6. Experience euphoria without drugs and come up with new ideas, when necessary.
7. Cope with extended periods of solitude, such as those related to academic studies or big writing projects.
8. Prevent yourself from making rash, impulsive decisions.
9. Prevent fits of anger and reduce feelings of hostility.
10. Sharpen your wit, become more talkative, and entertain people.
11. Depending on circumstances, use different regimens that improve one or another mental function.
12. Get along with people and reduce the amount of arguments and conflicts.

# CHAPTER 1: Mental clarity

***Contents:***

* [Biological components and knowledge components of intelligence](#Biological_components_and)
* The theory about the link between nutrion and mental abilities
* [Artificial ingredients in the diet and their effects on mental performance](#Artificial_ingredients_in)
* [Chemicals formed during the cooking of food and their effects on the brain](#Chemicals_that_are)
* [A diet that can worsen mental abilities quickly](#A_diet_that)
* [Potential adverse effects](#Potential_adverse_effects)

### Biological components and knowledge components of intelligence

For most lay readers the word “intelligence” is associated with the intelligence quotient (IQ), widely used as a measure of mental abilities for clinical, and sometimes, occupational purposes. The type of intelligence measured by IQ is called “academic intelligence” in psychological literature in order to distinguish it from other types of intelligence, such as emotional intelligence and social intelligence. Measurements of academic intelligence include assessment of the ability to process and manipulate verbal information (words) in one’s mind and the ability to process numerical information and carry out calculations. Academic intelligence also includes the ability to comprehend information about spatial organization and geometrical structure of objects. Scientists use the scores obtained by measuring the relevant mental abilities on intelligence tests to calculate a single value, *g*, or general intelligence. This measure of academic intelligence is not constant for any given person. It can change throughout a person’s lifespan. On average, general intelligence increases with age until the late 30s and then declines slowly. Due to the well-established age-related changes in general intelligence (*g*), calculation of the final IQ score includes adjusting *g* for the person’s age.

Most IQ tests produce a numerical value around 100, which is the average intelligence quotient of the human population. Values of IQ exceeding 100 mean higher than average intelligence. For example, only about 0.1% of the population has an IQ over 149. Conversely, IQ scores below 100 mean lower than average intelligence and a score lower than 70 suggests mental retardation. To sum up, IQ is the age-adjusted general intelligence factor (*g*) calculated by measuring various mental abilities related to the processing of verbal, numerical, and geometrical information. All of this is within the realm of academic intelligence, often called “intelligence.”

As to the practical usefulness of IQ testing, studies have identified correlations of IQ scores with academic performance and with job performance in a variety of occupations. A high score can predict better job performance. There is also some correlation of IQ with social status and income level, but this correlation is in the weak-to-moderate range. Equally or perhaps more important in attaining social status and high income are personality traits, social status of parents, and luck. Moderately high IQ scores correlate (moderately) with a higher social status and income. Yet statistical studies show that huge IQ scores provide little further benefit for social status and income (there is no correlation). Self-employment does not correlate with intelligence either.

Research in the last several decades has identified types of intelligence other than academic. These deal with mental abilities different from those measured by academic intelligence (IQ) tests. Emotional intelligence deals with mental abilities related to identification and processing of emotions in the self and other people. Social intelligence measures abilities related to intelligent behavior in social situations. Studies show that academic intelligence exhibits little if any correlation with emotional intelligence. These two concepts deal with independent and unrelated sets of mental abilities. We will discuss emotional and social intelligence in Chapters Four and Six.

Two other dimensions of intelligence are important here. “Crystallized intelligence” deals with acquired knowledge and skills. “Fluid intelligence” relates to how well the human brain works, regardless of knowledge and skills. “Crystallized intelligence” measures such abilities as vocabulary, general knowledge, and the like, while “fluid intelligence” assesses the ability to understand and solve novel problems. The formal definition of fluid intelligence is “on-the-spot reasoning and novel problem-solving ability.” For example, suppose two people have roughly the same amount of knowledge, but one of them can better understand complex problems. The latter person will attain a higher score on an intelligence test. In simple terms, fluid intelligence assesses how well the brain works; that is, it assesses the biological properties of the brain.

All three types of intelligence—academic, emotional, and social—have both knowledge components and biological components. The biological components are the main focus of this book because they deal with how well the brain functions and they are largely independent of knowledge and acquired skills. Put another way, this book focuses on improving the functioning of the human brain (fluid intelligence). Crystallized intelligence (knowledge and skills) will not change, at least in the short term, with approaches aimed at improving brain function.

This book defines the sum of all biological components of intelligence as “mental clarity.” This is a measure of how well the brain functions with respect to all kinds of mental tasks: those related to emotions and social situations as well as academic tasks and problems. Measurements of mental clarity will assess how well the brain is functioning in general.

I designed a brief self-rating questionnaire (Appendix IV) for this purpose. One of the drawbacks of this instrument is that self-rating questionnaires do not represent an accurate assessment of mental abilities. This is because self-rating often reflects a person’s opinion about his or her mental abilities rather than the actual mental abilities. For this reason, the mental clarity questionnaire is not an accurate measure of intelligence. Nevertheless, it does avoid direct questions about mental abilities and asks only questions that can assess such abilities indirectly, and thus more objectively. For example, many respondents will answer affirmatively the question “Do you think that you are very smart?” even those who don’t have above-average IQ scores. On the other hand, the question “Is your life easy?” will receive a more objective answer and will paint a more accurate picture of the respondent’s intelligence. Highly intelligent people usually have no difficulty solving life’s problems. The “ease of life” is not a perfect measure of intelligence and there are many exceptions; that is why the mental clarity questionnaire contains twenty questions.

The most accurate way to assess the usefulness of my advice is to take an official IQ test (not an internet IQ test) before and after one of the proposed lifestyle changes. You can then calculate the fluid component of academic intelligence and discover any improvement. If you are a student, you can assess improvement in your mental abilities, if any, by the change in your grade point average after you try some of the proposed techniques.

There is a possibility that your mental clarity score will be low, according to the proposed questionnaire (Appendix IV). This does not mean that you must drop everything and do your best to try to improve your score. Your low score can mean that your mental abilities are fine and the questionnaire is imperfect. So far, nobody has validated this questionnaire scientifically and you are under no obligation to do anything to improve your score.

### The theory about the link between nutrion and mental abilities

There are two notable differences between the diet of primates (and other animals) in the wild and a typical human diet. The first difference is that a typical human diet in industrialized countries is chockfull of various artificial ingredients that animals do not consume. These include food additives (salt, sugar, vinegar, nitrates, nitrites, monosodium glutamate, and others) and dietary supplements (artificial vitamins, minerals, and herbal extracts). The second difference is that animals living in the wild consume food that is raw (uncooked), whereas humans consume a predominantly cooked diet. In other words, modern primates and evolutionary predecessors of humans consume(d) a 100% raw diet that is free of any artificial chemicals.

It seems logical to hypothesize that this sort of diet, or a similar diet, is more “natural” for the human brain than the typical modern diet. The food additives have been present in the human diet for less than several centuries, whereas the cooking of food has been with us for about 300,000 years. From the standpoint of evolution, this amount of time may not be sufficient for humans to fully adapt to this new mode of nutrition. In other words, it is possible that a raw diet that is free of artificial chemicals will improve mental abilities of modern humans. For convenience, we will refer to this diet as the “ancestral diet” throughout the book.

At this point some readers may have gotten the impression that this text is advocating abandoning all food safety guidelines and recommending a 100% raw food diet containing meat and fish. Please note that this book does *not* recommend this sort of diet. In particular, readers should avoid consuming raw animal foods such as raw meat, raw fish, or raw milk because these products carry a risk of serious infectious disease. In my view, it is not necessary to subject oneself to this sort of risk in order to improve mental abilities. This book advances some arguments in favor of diets that are safe and at the same time similar to the ancestral diet.

A lower percentage of cooked food in the diet, a lower temperature of cooking (boiling rather than frying), and the exclusion of all artificial ingredients will all make a diet more similar to the ancestral diet. The gist of the theory behind the “smart diets” proposed in this book is the following. A diet that excludes all artificial chemicals and foods cooked at high temperatures (fried, baked, or grilled food) will improve mental abilities. There are several different smart diets, but all of them are based on raw and boiled food and all of them exclude articial ingredients, such as refined sugar, vinegar, citric acid, MSG, nitrates, most seasonings, salad dressings, sandwich spread, and so forth.

A smart diet may seem a little bland to an unaccustomed person, but this is a small price to pay for better intelligence and an easier life. If you choose to enjoy overly tasty food, such as junk food and fried food, on a daily basis, then you won’t be able to enjoy life because your brain will malfunction and you will be saddled with numerous day-to-day problems. On the other hand, if you choose to eat simple and moderately tasty food, such as boiled grains and boilded meat without any seasonings (small amounts of salt and natural fats are allowed), then your brain will work well and your life will be easier and more enjoyable. In other words, if you want to improve your mental clarity, you need to eat simpler food prepared in a simpler way.

Note that you don’t have to follow smart diets on a permanent basis in order to improve your intelligence. My experience suggests that if you adhere to a smart diet 25 to 50% of the time, this is enough to achieve the benefits. You don’t have to buy the more expensive organic food and you don’t need to avoid genetically modified food. There is no scientific evidence that those actions make any difference. Other limitations of the theory: fluoridation of water is not harmful and prescription drugs will not worsen your brain function, whereas refusal of treatment can worsen mental abilities due to deterioration of the general state of health.

I devised a food pyramid that separates foods into different groups based on their effects on the brain. Foods that are bad for the brain form the top of the pyramid (to be avoided or consumed sparingly). Sedative foods are in the middle of the pyramid, and “good foods” are at the base of the pyramid. It is called the “natural food pyramid” because of the above-mentioned theory regarding which foods are natural and which foods are less natural for the human brain.

***Table 3.*** The natural food pyramid.

***Problem food*** (avoid or consume it sparingly; it can impair mental abilities or cause other health problems): food containing food additives (white sugar, brown sugar, vinegar, nitrates, nitrites, monosodium glutamate, and others), dietary supplements (artificial vitamins, minerals, and herbal extracts), baked grains (bread), roasted nuts, fried, grilled or broiled meat (contains carcinogens), fried fish or any other fried food, smoked foods (contain carcinogens), honey, processed cheese, all kinds of junk food (candy, cake, ice cream, pastry, hot dogs, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, pizza, cookies, chocolate, pancakes, sandwiches, pasta, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, salad dressings, other seasonings; potato chips, soft drinks, chewing gum, and so on); large amounts of lean meat can cause problems; pungent vegetables may contribute to feelings of anger or hostility: this may also be true of some spices; bananas and legumes cause a lot of gas.

***Sedative food*** (can lower mood or cause slowing, without impairing judgment): minced meat (15% fat or higher) cooked by boiling or steaming, boiled or steamed fish, boiled eggs, whole grains cooked by boiling or steaming (for example, shredded wheat cereal, steamed brown rice); boiled legumes, such as beans; raw nuts.

***Good food*** (does not cause sedation and does not impair mental abilities): raw fruits and vegetables; boiled or steamed vegetables, including boiled potatoes; pasteurized juices (free of additives); pasteurized low-fat milk, kefir, or buttermilk (free of dietary supplements), unsalted unprocessed cheese; minced meat (15% fat or higher) cooked by boiling or steaming when you consume it (not in the same meal) with an equal or greater amount of the above dairy products; raw water extract of certain grains (optional) such as wheat, buckwheat, and oats; natural fats (used as a seasoning) such as unrefined vegetable oils.\*

\*Be careful with plant oils. I do not tolerate them well and avoid them. Dairy fat, such as butter and whole milk, tends to promote constipation according to some studies.

A great variety of different diets are possible using different combinations of the “sedative foods” and “good foods” from the above pyramid. We will talk about the concrete “smart diets” in later chapters.

Some placements of food products within this pyramid may seem contradictory and this is based on my personal experience, rather than on any convincing theory. I can explain some of these contradictions as follows. For example, honey, a natural food product, is at the top of the pyramid, among foods that you should avoid. In my experience, it is impossible to think clearly while consuming honey and this is why I try to avoid it or eat no more than a teaspoon per day. On the other hand, buttermilk and water extract of wheat can be considered “unnatural” because they are a processed type of food. Yet they are located at the base of the pyramid, with foods that one should consume in abundance. In my defense, the processing involved is simple and “natural” (fermentation with bacteria and mechanical separation of water-soluble and water-insoluble compenents).

At first glance, grinding and juicing may appear to be “unnatural.” But they do not change chemical composition of digestible nutrients. Juicing removes components that are virtually indigestible by humans. Therefore, juicing and grinding will not pose a problem. In my view, chewing of acid-rich (sour) types of fruit can be harmful for the teeth (for instance, citrus fruits, apples, cranberries, strawberries, other berries). Using a blender or consumption of fruit juices is less taxing on the teeth. One potential problem with fruit juices is a sugar overload if a person drinks large amounts of juices.

My advice is to follow conventional food pyramids most of the time, such as Harvard’s Healthy Eating Plate or the USDA’s MyPlate. The natural food pyramid, on the other hand, may be useful 25-50% of the time, when you need to solve some challanging problems or perform some difficult mental tasks. There are several advantages that the conventional dietary guidelines have over the diets proposed in this book. First, the conventional food pyramids are not “strange diets” and will not cut into your social life. Second, the official dietary guidelines represent safe and balanced diets and will not cause health problems in the majority of people. Third, a team of experts in the field of nutrition developed these guidelines, and their recommendations are based on the totality of all available scientific evidence.

Every     now and then researchers call into question the scientific validity of the food pyramids, and the government responds by revising them. For example, government experts used to say that all dietary fat is bad for health. Nowadays, some food pyramids state that trans-fat and saturated fat are bad fats, whereas unsaturated fat is good for you. The official position of health authorities on dietary fat may change again in the future. Nonetheless, the official guidelines are the *most scientific* dietary advice that you will find at any given point in time. If you ask me what kind of diet is the healthiest *for everyday use* for the majority of people, my response is as follows:

* a diverse diet based on boiled or steamed grains;
* it contains all food products listed among “good” and “sedative foods” (see the natural food pyramid);
* this diet limits or excludes “problem foods;”
* contains normal amounts of protein (about 100 grams or 3 ounces of protein-rich foods in every meal).

In my experience, this kind of nutrition causes the least amount of problems in the long run. It is possible to replace all grains with boiled potatoes for extended periods, many months. Based on my experience, the weight and satiety level will not change, but you will feel less bored. Nonetheless, the prolonged exclusion of grains from the diet is not good for mental health. At some point, I get insomnia and become irritable and restless. Raw wheat extract helps, but boiled grains cause a complete return to normalcy. As mentioned earlier, diets based on cooked grains, in my view, tend to promote boredom (along with normalcy) and can be problematic for a person who lives alone. In this case, one or two days a week of the antidepressant diet can be helpful (we will talk about this diet later). The antidepressant diet excludes cooked grains, which you can replace temporarily with boiled potatoes.

If the proposed theory has any validity, there should be evidence that cooking of food and the presence of artificial ingredients in the diet can worsen mental abilities. The next two sections briefly review this evidence.

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