

TESTING ... TESTING ... IS THIS BRAIN ON?

MATT KEEFER fires up his neurons to find out if he's Mensa material.

Bass pounding, guitar throbbing, my eyelids are closing themselves against my will at a Deer Tick concert. It's past midnight, and I only have one thing on my mind.

I have to take a Mensa test tomorrow.

So I simply nod when proctor Rick Wester offers this bit of advice when I show up at the Middletown Public Library the next morning at 9:30 to take the legendary admittance test to get into the group for really smart people:

"Get a good night's sleep. Have as few things on your mind as possible."

Wester hands me a folder with information on the ultra-intelligent group, and I look over a sheet that details the lives of famous Mensans: astronaut Bill McArthur, columnist Marilyn Vos Savant, and superhero Blue Power Ranger. I'm familiar with only one of these.

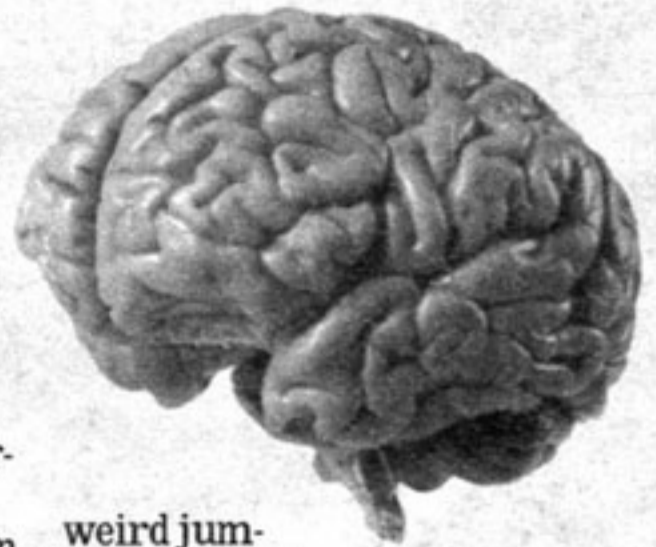
Wester captained a Coast Guard ship and, unable to fraternize with his crew, found the socials, dinners and gaming opportunities available through Mensa invaluable. The society is 100,000 strong worldwide, with 56,000 members in the U.S. Rhode Island is home to 290 Mensans.

Looking around the room,

there are four other Mensa-hopefuls: a man with a shaved head and glasses, a 14-year-old boy (this year is his first of being eligible to take the test), a Navy retiree who forgot his glasses, and a woman with a knit cap. The test actually is two tests, and all we need to do is score at or above the 98th percentile on either of them to be admitted. That correlates to 1 in 50 people making it through to become eligible to join — for a yearly membership fee of \$59.

The first test, the glorious Wonderlic, is a 50-question, 12-minute feat of mental strength in which you burn out about halfway through and make up the answers to the rest of the open blanks as quickly as possible. Then you turn your head up and appear as if you passed it. There are shapes you have to dissect, sentences you reconstruct, and math with decimals, all of which apparently is useful to NFL candidates as well, as the test is used as a pre-draft gauge. Strange factoid: quarterbacks are not the smartest position. Not on the test.

After the pure exhaustion of that 1/5th hour (I'm good with fractions at least), the beef of the test is the Mensa Admission Test, a seven-part tour de force that begins with a bland, spoken 10-minute essay on Greek something, and ends with you mis-answering questions about it. On the whole, it is roughly an hour and 20 minutes of picture analogies, a vocabulary test (which is my weakest point, strangely enough), and some



weird jum-bo coin chart where you have to make change. I suppose that last part is to gauge whether you'd be a good cashier. Throughout the test, it should be noted there is an alarming lack of baseball statistics, Sports Illustrated models trivia, and no questions about the relative differences of various classic muscle cars.

Afterwards, relief sets in that the test is over. There are no more questions about perimeters or about Dionysus, everyone's favorite god of wine. The important thing to keep in mind is that it is, after all, just a test, and passing it or failing it will do little to determine your success in life. Getting in or not is not the end of the world, and if you feel like stretching your mental muscles a bit, then the \$40 test fee might be worth it.

Of course, it feels good if you're a genius like me and pass it. Go figure. Anybody got \$59 they could loan me?

Matt Keefer suggests a strict diet of gummy frogs and potato chips (Classic Lays) to guarantee your admittance to Mensa. Or just find someone you can bribe.

WICKED SMART? TRY THESE MENSA WORKOUT QUESTIONS. ANSWERS ON PAGE 2.

1. Sally likes 225 but not 224; she likes 900 but not 800; she likes 144 but not 145. Which does she like?

1600 1700

2. If two typists can type two pages in two minutes, how many typists will it take to type 18 pages in six minutes?

3 4 6 12 36

3. Fill in the missing number:

0,1,1,2,3,5,8,13,_,34,55

4. Which of the following is least like the others?

Poem Novel Painting
 Statue Flower

5. Four years ago, Jane was twice as old as Sam. Four years from now, Sam will be 3/4 of Jane's age. How old is Jane now?

6. What is the following word when it is unscrambled?

H C P R A A T E U

7. Only one other word can be made from all the letters of INSATIABLE. Can you find it?

8. Which same three-letter word can be placed in front of the following words to make a new word?

SIGN, DONE, DUCT, FOUND, FIRM, TRACT, DENSE

9. Which letter comes next in this series of letters?

B A C B D C E D F ?

C D E F G

10. Pear is to apple as potato is to?

Banana Radish
 Strawberry Peach Lettuce