

ABILITY



EXPLORER™

ADMINISTRATOR'S GUIDE SECOND EDITION

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Questions and Answers About the *Ability Explorer*

Before administering the *Ability Explorer*, you can benefit from reading and discussing the following information with your students, job seekers, or clients.

What Are Abilities?

What do you do well? Are you good in math? Science? English? Are you a good athlete? Do you listen well? Are you well organized?

There are many kinds of abilities. Some people say that we're born with certain abilities. Others say that abilities are developed through experiences. Both of these points probably are true, but it is definitely true that each of us has abilities. And for each of us, some abilities are stronger than others.

What do *you* do well? When you answer that question, you're talking about your abilities.

Why Is It Important to Think About Abilities?

People are usually happiest when they have the chance to do the things they do well. If you're in school, this means taking the courses which you do best in. If you're working, it means having a job that uses as many of your abilities as possible. Thinking about what you do well leads to choices in school and for your career that can make you happier. Do you play a musical instrument? Do you work well in groups? Are you good at fixing things?

Maybe the most important question is, "What kind of career do you want?" Think about what you do well.

How Can I Know What My Abilities Are?

If you ask people who know you to tell you what your abilities are, they might be able to answer you. But you are likely to hear different things from different people. That's because you not only have various abilities, but also because people have different opinions. When it

comes down to it, you're probably the best judge of your abilities. You know yourself better than anyone else.

That's the idea behind the *Ability Explorer*. It's a self-measure that asks you to rate yourself in different ability areas by marking how well you think you could do certain things if given a chance. In this way, the *Ability Explorer* helps you zero in on your strongest abilities.

Maybe you already know your best ability, but what about other abilities you might have?

What Abilities Can I Learn About Through the *Ability Explorer*?

The *Ability Explorer* lets you rate yourself in 14 ability areas. Why so many? For one thing, no two people are alike. People are strong in different abilities. Some people have many abilities; some have a few. The *Ability Explorer* gives you a chance to find out which ones are your best abilities.

The 14 ability areas in the *Ability Explorer* are

- Artistic
- Clerical
- Interpersonal
- Language
- Leadership
- Manual
- Musical/Dramatic
- Numerical/Mathematical
- Organizational
- Persuasive
- Scientific
- Social
- Spatial
- Technical/Mechanical

Why Do I Need to Know About All 14 Ability Areas of the *Ability Explorer*?

If your career choice matters to you, it is important to know about all 14 ability areas of the *Ability Explorer*.

That's because the jobs available today and in the future call for many of these abilities. For example, more and more jobs are in customer service. These jobs require interpersonal, persuasive, and even leadership abilities. There are a growing number of jobs in information technology. These jobs require computer skills and language, organizational, and technical/mechanical abilities. What if you want a job in the media? Do you like sales? Do you see yourself as a doctor, a teacher, or a counselor? Do you think you would be good working with computers or with the Web? All of these jobs, and most others, require different abilities. That's why the *Ability Explorer* measures 14 important workplace abilities.

What Is the *Ability Explorer*?

The *Ability Explorer* isn't a test. It is a tool for exploring your abilities. It asks you to rate yourself not only in different ability areas by marking how well you think you could do certain things if given a chance, but it also has two other parts. One part asks you to consider how well you think you've done certain activities in the past; the other asks you to consider how well you've done in school courses you've taken. Both of these parts, activity statements and school courses, relate to the 14 ability areas. Together, the three parts of the *Ability Explorer* let you see how your past involvement in the ability areas compares with your self-rating on the abilities. Maybe you think you could do better in the future than you have in the past in certain ability areas. Maybe you've done better in the past than you self-rate yourself now. In any case, this *Ability Explorer* information can help you plan for the future when you think about courses, training, and career choice or career change. It's up to you to decide which abilities you want to develop and how you want to develop them.

Can I Fail the *Ability Explorer*?

The *Ability Explorer* is not a test, so it's impossible to fail. However, it is possible to rate yourself low on any number of abilities. Even if you do that, the *Ability Explorer* will give you information on what you can do to develop abilities that you might be interested in. It tells you which courses you can take, what activities you can get involved in, and what careers you can explore for each of the 14 ability areas. The *Ability Explorer* lives up to its name: It helps you really explore your abilities.

What Information Will I Receive from Taking the *Ability Explorer*?

After taking the *Ability Explorer*, you will score it according to a few simple directions. Your scores will tell you how you rated yourself on all 14 abilities. The *Ability Explorer* will give you specific information on your highest-rated abilities. This will include information about school courses, activities, and careers you may want to get involved in to develop these abilities more. The *Ability Explorer* has a next step that helps you explore specific occupations in the Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook*.

Orientation

Before administering the *Ability Explorer*, introduce the importance of learning about abilities and how this information will relate to educational and career planning. Orientation may take place in a classroom period, workshop introduction, or other setting before administering the *Ability Explorer*. You may do the orientation for groups or on an individual basis. For purposes of orientation, you can duplicate "Questions and Answers About the *Ability Explorer*" for distribution to participants. This introduction is designed to answer questions individuals may have before they take the *Ability Explorer*. You also can briefly discuss with participants the "Descriptions of the 14 Abilities" on page 9 of the *Ability Explorer* survey booklet.

The following suggestions help you prepare individuals to take the *Ability Explorer*:

- As appropriate for your group, explain how the *Ability Explorer* provides information that helps them see the connection between what they do in school and the world of work that they will enter. Not only will they learn which work-related abilities they self-rate the highest, but they will consider how well they have developed those abilities through related activities and school courses. The *Ability Explorer* results can help individuals make the transition from school to work or to postsecondary education or training. A person could also use this information in a college or job interview. Participants will gain information on activities and courses that can develop those abilities further so that career goals can be achieved. We strongly encourage you to become familiar with "Step 8:

Connect Your Abilities to Careers" on pages 14-15 of the survey booklet.

- Plan to make the *Ability Explorer* results part of the participants' career portfolios. Because the *Ability Explorer* measures work-related abilities, participants can use their results to do career exploration and planning as part of an integrated career portfolio strategy. The *Ability Explorer* provides career suggestions for all 14 abilities. In addition, participants can use information on activities and courses related to their highest-rated abilities as evidence for how much they have developed those abilities. Having the participants take the *Ability Explorer* every other year can show each participant's development. Detailed information on interpreting results and using activities for each developmental period can be found on the *Ability Explorer Professional Resources CD-ROM* (sold separately by JIST Publishing). Having participants use the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, which is described in the survey booklet on page 16, assures that survey takers are acquainted with the skills, knowledge, and labor market information related to an occupation they have researched.
- Emphasize that the *Ability Explorer* is not a test. The *Ability Explorer* is unlike traditional aptitude batteries. It is a self-measure of abilities with no right or wrong answers. Therefore, it is impossible for individuals to fail the *Ability Explorer*. It is a tool for exploring abilities. And no matter how an individual self-rates himself or herself on abilities, the *Ability Explorer* results provide constructive information for developing abilities.

General Directions

You do not need special training to administer the *Ability Explorer*. We recommend, however, that you read these directions and become familiar with the *Ability Explorer* survey booklet before beginning to administer the instrument. Before administering the *Ability Explorer*, it is important to provide participants with an introduction that discusses the importance of exploring their abilities and how self-awareness of abilities will help them with educational and career planning. We give suggestions for orientation in the previous section.

Administration Time

The *Ability Explorer* is untimed. However, we estimate that actual administration time and scoring for the survey booklet is 35 to 45 minutes, or one class period, depending on the group's or individual's reading ability.

What to Do If More Time Is Needed for the Steps

Participants may not have enough time to complete all the activities in Steps 5 through 9 of the *Ability Explorer* on the same day you administer it. These steps may be done on another day, but it is best that they be done soon after participants have completed the scoring.

Administering to Special Populations

The *Ability Explorer* is appropriate for use with all individuals who are involved in career exploration and educational or career planning. As a result, some individuals with special needs, such as those who are limited-English proficient, may benefit from an oral administration of the *Ability Explorer*. It is written at about an eighth-grade reading level.

Specific Directions

Before administering the *Ability Explorer*, make sure that each person has a survey booklet and a pen or pencil. It is not necessary to use No. 2 pencils, but changing answers is easier with pencils.

It may be helpful to have the following information written on the board. This information refers to the assessment portion of the *Ability Explorer*:

very good	6
good	5
little above average	4
little below average	3
poor	2
very poor	1

All directions that you are to read to the participants are printed in bold and indicated by "Say." If you are planning to administer the *Ability Explorer* orally, read each statement clearly and be sure to pause between each statement.

Say Today you are going to learn something about your abilities. I will first give each of you a survey booklet. Do not write on it until I tell you to.

We will now fill out the information on the first page. At the top, write your name and today's date.

After everyone has finished,

Say In the same section, put a check mark in the box next to your gender (female or male). Then write down my name on the "Administered by" line. Next write your grade and your date of birth.

After everyone has finished,

Say Now look at the information that follows. Read this information to yourself as I read it aloud.

"Everyone has abilities. What do *you* do well? When you answer that question, you're talking about your abilities. Some of your abilities are stronger than other abilities. Knowing about your abilities can help you make the most of them when planning your future. People are usually happiest when they use their best abilities.

"The *Ability Explorer* helps you find out which abilities are your best ones. It covers 14 abilities and then connects your top abilities to certain courses, activities, and careers.

"The *Ability Explorer* is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. To begin using the *Ability Explorer*, open this booklet and begin with Step 1."

Answer all questions. When everyone is ready, continue with the next section below.

Explaining How to Self-Rate

Say Go to Page 2. Read this information to yourself as I read it aloud.

"The *Ability Explorer* has 140 statements that describe activities. Read each statement carefully. Then think about how good you are at doing the activity or how well you think you could do the activity if given the chance. In the empty box next to the statement, write the number that best describes your answer.

- "If you are very good at doing the activity or think you would be very good at doing the activity, write the number 6.
- "If you are good at doing the activity or think you would be good at doing the activity, write the number 5.

- “If you do the activity a little above average or think you would be able to do the activity a little above average, write the number 4.
- “If you do the activity a little below average or think you would do the activity a little below average, write the number 3.
- “If you are poor at doing the activity or think you would be poor at doing the activity, write the number 2.
- “If you are very poor at doing the activity or think you would be very poor at doing the activity, write the number 1.”

Remember that the statements are asking you to rate yourself on how well you believe you can do a certain activity, not on whether you would *like* to do the activity.

Answer all questions. When everyone is ready,

Say Now look at the examples and read them to yourself.

When everyone is ready,

Say If you need to change an answer, either erase or cross out your response and put in your new answer.

Answer all questions. Some people may not be familiar with marking an assessment booklet. In this case, you may want to spend extra time helping these individuals to understand how to do this task. When everyone is ready,

Say It is important that you respond to all the statements. Continue until you get to the end of page 6.

Important: Remind individuals that the number 6 stands for “very good,” with numbers falling in descending order to 1, which stands for “very poor.” You may want to refer to the information you have written on the board. When everyone is ready,

Say If at anytime you have a question, feel free to ask for help. You may begin.

If participants do not understand a statement, you may help them. This is not a test. Check to see that everyone is responding to all the statements. After approximately 20–25 minutes (or sooner, if everyone is finished),

Say Stop. You have completed the assessment part of the *Ability Explorer*. The next part is scoring your abilities.

Scoring

Next have everyone score and record their results in the *Ability Explorer*. You have the option of collecting the booklets and scoring them yourself or with the help of an aide. However, the scoring directions are easy for individuals to follow. Nonetheless, you should read the directions to them as they read along silently. When you are ready,

Say Look on page 7 at “Step 2: Subtotal Your Scores.” Read the information to yourself while I read it aloud.

“Go back to Page 3 and add the numbers you entered in the first column. Write the amount in the shaded box labeled ‘A.’”

See the example on the right. Note the five ratings in the “A” column equal 14 when added. Any questions?

Pause. Give individuals sufficient time to do the task and then continue.

Say “Next, add the numbers in the second column, and write the amount in the shaded box labeled ‘B.’ Continue by adding all the columns on pages 3, 4, 5, and 6. Write each column amount in the shaded box at the bottom of each column.”

After you see that everyone has added his or her scores on pages 3, 4, 5, and 6,

Say Look on page 7 at “Step 3: Total Your Scores.” Read the information to yourself while I read it aloud.

“Notice that your scores on page 3 are labeled ‘Section 1 Subtotals.’ Put your Section 1 Subtotals in the table below. Continue by copying the subtotals from Sections 2, 3, and 4 to the table below. Then add the two numbers in each row. Write the total for each row in the YOUR TOTAL column.”

See the example below.

Watch individuals as they do this task. Answer all questions. Individuals will be transferring their total scores now from one page to another. Caution them to be careful not to make mistakes in transferring numbers. Have them check to make sure that each box has the right number for it. When they are ready,

Say You will now make a score report of your *Ability Explorer* results. Look on page 8 at “Step 4: Understand Your Scores and Learn More About Abilities.” Read this information to yourself as I read it aloud.

“Your totals for the letters A through N in Step 3 represent your self-rating on 14 abilities. Copy your total from the previous page for each letter to the space below. Then circle the range of numbers for each ability that includes your score.”

When participants have finished Step 4, tell them to read “How Your Ability Ratings Compare.”

Let participants know that the key to completing “Your Two Highest-Rated Abilities” is to identify their highest score. That will determine the highest-rated ability. Each individual then identifies his or her second-highest score. That will determine the second-highest ability. The booklet tells how to break ties.

Answer all questions. After everyone has done this,

Say You have made your score report. You are finished with the scoring part of the *Ability Explorer*. The rest of the *Ability Explorer* will let you explore your abilities through different activities. This begins on page 10 with the section that says “Step 5: Develop Your Abilities Through Activities.” This step also includes “Rate Your Reading Ability.” Follow the directions on your own in this step and in the next step, which is “Step 6: Develop Your Abilities Through Courses.” If you have any questions, raise your hand and I will help answer them. You may begin now.

When you think everyone has completed Steps 5 and 6, proceed to the next step below.

Creating the Ability Profile

This step generally depends on the maturity of the individual(s). The reason for this caution is that individuals will be going back to pages in the *Ability Explorer* to get information, with different directions for each task.

Say Look on page 14 at “Step 7: Create Your Ability Profile.” Read this information to yourself as I read it aloud.

“This step shows whether your activities and course performance are helping to develop your two highest-rated abilities.

- “ 1. Where indicated below, list your two highest-rated abilities. Checkmark your self-rating for the two abilities: High, Medium, or Low. Refer to page 8 to recall your self-rating for your two highest abilities.
- “ 2. For the Activities row in the charts below, checkmark High if you checked 6 to 8 activities for each highest-rated ability. Checkmark Medium if you checked 3 to 5 activities. Checkmark Low if you checked 0 to 2 activities. Refer to pages 10 and 11 to see how many activities you checked for your two highest-rated abilities.
- “ 3. For the Course Grades row in the charts below, checkmark High if your average grades are A and B for each highest ability. Checkmark Medium for C grades. Checkmark Low for D or F grades. Refer to pages 12 and 13 to see the course grades for your two highest abilities. Leave the rating box empty if you have not taken any courses in this ability area.”

Caution: Be prepared at this point or when you begin interpreting the scores to hear questions about an ability that is not displayed. The *Ability Explorer, Second Edition*, has two objectives: To make the administration shorter and to make the *Ability Explorer* easier to interpret by focusing on a person's two highest abilities. If a person mentions he or she didn't get any information on a favorite ability or one which interests him or her, immediately say

Say Go back to page 8. Find the name of the ability you want and on a separate sheet write whether it has a high, medium, or low score. Then go to page 14 and follow the directions for activity involvement (number 2) and school course performance (number 3). You can follow the same procedure for any ability you want to examine more closely.

Helping Individuals Interpret Their Scores

If an individual has all high scores, has this person over-rated himself or herself? You do not want to challenge this person's self-confidence. One way of approaching this situation is to look at course grade performance and activity involvement to see whether they support the individual's self-ratings. Remember your task is not to lower a person's self-esteem, but to help the person support his or her self-perception.

If a person has all low scores, is this because the individual took the instrument carelessly? Does this person have a negative attitude? Or, does this person truly believe he or she is poor in many respects and thus identifies himself or herself as at risk for future education and career problems.

Use the three possible interpretations under "What Your Ability Profile Shows" on page 14 in the survey booklet to elicit responses.

If individuals need more help interpreting their results, particularly if they have questions about the section "How Your Ability Ratings Compare (to others)," you may wish to direct them to a school counselor or a career counselor. Detailed information on interpreting scores can be found on the *Ability Explorer Professional Resources CD-ROM*, which is sold separately.

About the Ability Explorer Professional Resources CD-ROM

The *Ability Explorer Professional Resources CD-ROM*, Second Edition, includes a detailed professional manual, a reproducible administrator's record, illustrative cases, follow-up activities, detailed normative information, and guidance for using the *Ability Explorer* with other assessments, as part of a career portfolio, and in a comprehensive career guidance and counseling program. To order the *Ability Explorer Professional Resources CD-ROM*, call 1-800-648-JIST or visit www.jist.com.

Supporting DVD Available

A DVD program that describes the abilities covered in *Ability Explorer* is available separately from JIST. This DVD is ideal for use in workshops, classes, and other group settings. Please call 1-800-648-JIST for details.

Notes for Using the Reproducible *Ability Explorer* Administrator's Record on the Next Page

Assessing All Abilities

Most people are interested in knowing about all of their abilities—their strengths as well as those areas in which they are not as strong. Adapt the directions in Step 5 on pages 10 and 11 of the *Ability Explorer* by telling people to mark their activity involvement for all ability areas. Finishing Step 5 will permit a person to fill in the Administrator's Record on the following page, giving a complete presentation of the available information from the *Ability Explorer*. Later, you as the administrator can obtain percentiles or *T*-scores for each ability from the norm tables in the *Ability Explorer Professional Resources CD-ROM*.

About the Authors

Joan C. Harrington holds a B.A. in English and Business from Northeastern University in Boston and has taught in the elementary grades in Boston. She has lived and worked in Australia, Jamaica, the United Kingdom, Israel, and the Republic of South Africa, where she was involved in test construction, including identifying, assessing, and validating abilities. She has published in the *Journal of Career Assessment* and the *Career Development Quarterly* and has been a presenter at national and international conferences.

Thomas F. Harrington holds a Ph.D. in Counseling from Purdue University and has been a long-time teacher of vocational psychology and career counseling courses in the Department of Counseling and Applied Educational Psychology at Northeastern University. In 2004, he received the National Career Development Association's highest honor, The Eminent Career Award. In 2005, he was recognized with the ACA Fellow Award by the American Counseling Association for making a significant contribution to the counseling profession. (Editor's note: There are only 15 ACA Fellows.) He is the co-author of the award-winning *Harrington-O'Shea Career Decision-Making System*, co-author of the *College Majors Handbook with Real Career Paths and Payoffs* (JIST Publishing), and editor of the *Handbook of Career Planning for Students with Special Needs*. He has served as President of the Association for Assessment in Counseling, a division of the American Counseling Association. He is a frequent speaker at national and international conferences.

Ability Explorer Administrator's Record

Name _____ Date _____

Gender Male Female Administered by _____

Grade _____ Date of Birth _____

Directions: In the two boxes below, copy your information from page 14 of the *Ability Explorer*.

Highest-Rated Ability: _____

Second Highest-Rated Ability: _____

	High	Medium	Low
Self-Rating for Ability			
Activities			
Course Grades			

	High	Medium	Low
Self-Rating for Ability			
Activities			
Course Grades			

In the first column below, write the names of the other 12 abilities from highest to lowest using your total scores from page 8. Do not include your two highest-rated abilities you listed in the two boxes above. Then complete the other columns of the chart for each ability. Refer to the pages in the *Ability Explorer* as needed to complete the chart.

Abilities			Activities		Course Grades	
Ability	Your Total from Page 8	Rating (High, Medium, or Low) from Page 8	Number of Activities Checked on Pages 10-11	Rating (6-8 High, 3-5 Medium, 0-2 Low)	Average Grades Circled on Pages 12-13	Rating (A-B High, C Medium, or D-F Low)
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
11.						
12.						
13.						
14.						

Reading Ability. Circle your response from page 11: High Medium Low