



## A Highlands Ability Battery and Natural Abilities FAQ for Parents

### **What is the Highlands Ability Battery?**

The Highlands Ability Battery (HAB) is an assessment that measures aptitudes that stabilize around age 14 and are not typically modified by training or practice. It's also a life-changing experience that can re-direct a person's choices in school and work.

### **How are abilities assessed?**

Unlike tests of skills, personality, interests, or values – all of which are influenced by changes over time – abilities are assessed through the actual performance of tasks which measure how easily you can perform those tasks. HAB worksamples require the test-taker to follow instructions on the computer screen (reproduced in audio) and then to “do” or “recognize” something in response. In all, the HAB takes 3.5 hours to complete and can be taken anywhere there is a reliable Internet connection.

### **What abilities does the HAB measure?**

The HAB measures 14 abilities, 3 personal style dimensions, and one skill.

### **The abilities:**

- **Diagnostic thinking** Diagnostic thinking is an aptitude for recognizing a common relationship among seemingly discrete or unrelated notions or ideas. Strong diagnostic thinkers typically perform well when a premium is placed on rapidly identifying solutions or understanding complex problems often found in the medical, legal and various consulting fields.
- **Analytical thinking** is an aptitude to recognize structure among related ideas. People with strong analytical ability gravitate towards the logical sequencing of facts, events or processes often found in engineering, computer programming, accounting finance and editing fields.
- **Idea productivity** is the rate at which a person offers ideas; a measure of the quantity of ideas, not their quality. In addition to roles within fields such as advertising, marketing and writing, the ability enhances persuading, selling and communication.
- **Spatial relations theory** is the ability to understand the theoretical underpinnings or the interconnectedness of mechanical or interpersonal systems.
- **Spatial relations visualization** or structural visualization is the ability to perceive objects in three dimensions. People strong in this ability need a connection to the hands-on or concrete world often found in mechanical, dental, scientific, engineering, architectural and artistic fields.
- **Observation** is the ability to recall objects and changes in a person's field of vision.
- **Design memory** is the ability to visualize, recall, and expand on a two-dimensional graphic or design; useful in fields such as biology, architecture, fashion, and art history.
- **Verbal memory** is the ability to remember material presented in written form and to associate words or terms that relate to each other.
- **Tonal memory** is the ability to remember and differentiate between musical tones; the memory for melodies and harmonies; a measure of the ability to learn by listening.
- **Rhythm memory** is the ability to perceive and remember rhythmic patterns and actions; relates to the process of learning through movement (kinesthetics).
- **Pitch** discrimination is the ability to perceive and identify minute differences in sounds on a tonal scale; relates to the ability to detect fine differences in taste, touch, and the other senses.
- **Number memory** is the ability to remember non-associated numbers. The student sees multi-digit numbers and is asked to reproduce them. This is a valuable ability in inventory control, stock trading, and retail sales.
- **Visual speed** and **visual accuracy** are the speed and accuracy with which one sees and processes numbers, letters, and symbols.

The three personal style dimensions the HAB measures influence a person's response to other people and the optimal work environment.

### **The three personal style dimensions:**

- The **generalist/specialist scale** where generalists are group workers and have an easy time working through and with other people; specialists prefer to contribute independently and to develop “their own thing”
- The **extrovert/introvert scale** where extroverts are energized by others, think out loud, and need people to work with and talk to, and introverts are self-energized, reflective thinkers and work well quietly on their own.
- **Time frame** orientation measures how far out into the future a person prefers to set and work toward targets. This can influence the length of time a person expects to achieve goals such as the difference between project work and strategic planning.

### **The one skill:**

- **Vocabulary** measures the linguistic level at which a person expresses thoughts and concepts to others – a vital predictor of success and performance levels at work.

### ***Students grow and change over time. Do their abilities change as they grow?***

No, abilities as we define them are stable and develop naturally by the age of 14 or 15. At that point, they remain, essentially unchanged, throughout the rest of life. Skills can be added and studies can be modified, but natural abilities are constant.

### ***What factors are not measured by the HAB?***

The HAB does not result in grades, and they do not reflect class standing or general intelligence. Abilities assessments are designed, instead, to get at the student's core strengths and to help him or her articulate those strengths in terms that guide success and happiness in life and career.

### ***When should a high school student complete the HAB?***

Scientists have determined that a child's natural abilities mature and are ready to be tested at any time after the age of about fourteen. The sooner after that age your child is tested, the sooner he or she can take advantage of the insights the test provides into good study and learning habits, as well as into the selection of the right college and career.

### ***The HAB sounds complex and the results hard to understand. How do you help my child to know what the results mean?***

First of all, your child gets a detailed set of reports that include a bar chart and discussion of the test results. What sets the HAB apart from other ability assessors is the personalized two-hour consult with a Certified Highlands Consultant. Over 300 professionals have received 40+ hours of training directly from The Highlands Company to interpret the report and provide personalized feedback. You can find a consultant who specializes in working with students at HighlandsCo.com.

### ***Do the results of an abilities assessment help the student to define the ideal college learning environment?***

Yes. A college's learning environment is determined by its size, the size of its classes, the ratio of faculty to student, its housing arrangements, the size and scope of its library, its eating arrangements, etc. Most critical is the college's commitment to a particular program of study, the breadth or specificity of offerings, and the options available through campus student services that will best support your student's learning. The HAB reveals how your child learns best, which helps direct your child to the right school and learning environment.

### ***How does an abilities assessment help in the choice between a liberal arts college and an engineering school?***

A student who knows his or her own strengths is miles ahead of a student who doesn't. Several of the abilities measured on the HAB form patterns which indicate whether a student will be happier in liberal arts or in engineering. An engineer should ideally be strong in analytical thinking, spatial visualization, observation, and design memory. On the other hand, the ideal pre-law student

will probably also score in the high range in diagnostic thinking, analytical thinking and time frame, and score low in spatial relations visualization. High scores in vocabulary also suggest success in law, medicine, editing and entrepreneurship.

### ***What new insights does an ability assessment provide that are not measured by a student's grades or the standardized test scores?***

Grades and standardized test scores represent a convenient means by which the colleges measure and qualify students. However, they are more representative of skills and level of learning than of true abilities. Educators are not generally pleased that they are limited to these devices. Many of them would prefer a test that separates and identifies students on the basis of their natural abilities. Certainly, the concentration on grades and achievement ignores the role of natural abilities in education. How can we identify the next Mozart or the next Einstein without testing for natural abilities?

### ***My child is a good overall student but she feels that she has no special talents. Would an ability assessment help her get a better sense of direction?***

Yes. An abilities assessment combined with student-specific feedback is of special importance to students without identifiable special talents. Why? Because these students know very little about themselves that will help them in college and work. An abilities assessment and interpretation by a trained consultant will go far in telling them how they solve problems, how they learn best, what work environment is right for them, whether they have measurable musical talent, and how they relate to and are perceived by others. The experience of completing the HAB and discussing the results with a consultant will do more to impress how special they are better than anything else.

### ***Will an abilities assessment help my child to study better?***

Yes. One of the strengths of the HAB is that it tests the five prime learning channels – verbal memory, tonal memory, design memory, number memory, and rhythm memory. In the HAB report, we include a chart showing the student's relative strength in all five learning channels, which will show him how he best learns and what tools to rely on going forward.

### ***How can I confirm that the results of the HAB are valid and reliable?***

Psychometric tests are expected to satisfy the tests of reliability and validity. Reliability is the degree to which a test will remain consistent in its results over a period of time. Validity is a measure of the certainty or confidence with which we can ascribe a contextual significance to any score on a test. You can find reliability and validity research reports on our website at [highlandsco.com](http://highlandsco.com).

### ***My child suffers from low self-esteem. Is there a risk that he will fail the Highlands assessment of abilities?***

No, it is impossible to fail the HAB. We do not grade anything. We simply measure how well the child is able to perform each worksample. Our aim is to identify a child's strengths. If she does well in diagnostic thinking, for example, she shows the strengths typical of lawyers. If she does well in spatial visualization, she would do well to consider a career in engineering or medicine. The point is that our abilities testing is never judgmental. It simply confirms the abilities your child has and gives her the confidence to describe them in her college application.

### ***How does the HAB help a teacher or a school's guidance counselor to write a better recommendation letter?***

The more we know about a student, the better we are able to help him or her to choose the right college, and the better we're able to express in our recommendation letters what that student can contribute to the college. If the HAB suggests that the student is both an introvert and a specialist, for example, we would not recommend a general program of study at a large liberal arts college. Instead, we would suggest a small college or a specialized program of study or an honors program at a larger university which would enable the student to concentrate on specialized projects and shine.

### ***How does an abilities assessment help in the years after college?***

Because abilities assessment measures natural abilities at the age of maturity, they are solid markers of a person's strengths and style. Once the results are embodied in a report that the student can study and discuss with a Highlands Certified Consultant, the results represent a guide to a satisfying life and career.

So many college students, assuming that they will go on to the same career as a parent or a personal hero, embark on the wrong courses. One student we know chose courses in anatomy because she thought there was glamour and excitement in forensic medicine. At the end of her junior year, she realized that her real love was teaching young children. She took the HAB and her results confirmed her ability to find fulfillment in teaching. Her results showed that she was a generalist and an extrovert and had strong scores in classification, idea productivity, and verbal memory. The HAB enables students to make better choices about college majors and about their careers. The results of an ability assessment is a tool for life.

### ***How does the HAB compare in cost with other abilities assessments and with prep courses for the SAT or ACT?***

When you pay for the HAB, you pay for a three-hour assessment, a 30+ page report detailing results, and a two-hour debrief with a Highlands Certified Consultant. The debrief can be conducted either in person or by phone. The price of the HAB is usually considerably less than the cost of in-house assessments conducted in assessment clinics, and even more cost-efficient when compared with the usual SAT or ACT prep courses.

### ***What's next? How do we get started?***

We recommend you first ask your child's school if there is a teacher or counselor certified in the HAB. If so, he or she should be able to get your child set-up with the HAB and complete the debrief in a short period of time. If there is not a Highlands Certified Consultant at your child's school, you will find a directory of certified consultants on our website. You can search for practitioners by location and specialty. Most all consultants provide both in-person and over-the-phone debriefs.

Lastly, we also recommend you complete the HAB for yourself. The Highlands Whole Person Method, of which the HAB is only one piece, will allow you to look at your strengths as a parent, friend, partner, and professional, and it will provide a common language for you and your family to rely on as you move through life together. To read examples of families who have done just that visit [The Highlands Company blog](#).



**Highlands  
Ability Battery (HAB)**

*High-Tech Career Assessment*

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