

A Look at Spatial Reasoning and Lawyers, Engineers, and Artists, Oh My!



Natural abilities are amazing. They influence how we interact with others, what we choose to do, and learn how to do, and they influence how our brain reasons things out. Our Spatial Abilities have a significant impact on how we reason through problems and many of us haven't given it a second thought! Each of the two Spatial Abilities measured on the Highlands Ability Battery (HAB) needs to be considered individually and together. Believe it or not, it is possible to be strong on one and not the other.

Each of the two Spatial Abilities measured on the Highlands Ability Battery (HAB) needs to be considered individually and together. Believe it or not, it is possible to be strong on one and not the other.

In this episode of our epic series on [what natural abilities even mean](#), we dive into Spatial Reasoning.

Let's consider Spatial Relations Visualization (SRV) first. This is the ability to see in three-dimensions when only given two, and scoring in the low or high range has a significant impact on the kind of work that feels satisfying.

People Who Score at the HIGH End of the SRV Continuum



People that relate best to the tangible, concrete world. Sometimes described as structural, these people find great comfort in working with their hands, producing a concrete product, seeing how solid objects fit or work, and generally like to use this hands-on ability in the work they do.

Appreciating and learning the intricacies of the intangible world, structural people are driven to spend the majority of their time connected to the tangible world and would feel like something was “missing” if they couldn’t have that regular connection.

What do you think are some traditional careers fields you might gravitate toward if you have the ability to reason in 3-D? If you said engineering, construction, medicine, or art, you would be right!

People Who Score at the LOW End of the SRV Continuum



People at the low end of the SRV continuum, relate best to the intangible world. These people feel at home in the world of words, ideas, relationships, plans, policies, and feelings. While working with tangible things may be a regular part of their world, they learn how to work with their hands, to think structurally, and use tools on an as-needed basis. They appreciate that others have that ability! However, those at the low end of the SRV continuum are driven to spend the majority of their time connected to the intangible world. They would miss not having those connections in their lives.

What do you think are some traditional career fields you might gravitate toward if you have the ability to reason in the intangible world? If you said law, public policy, counseling or non-technical teaching, you would be right!

But wait a minute! *Is everyone in the field of engineering, construction, medicine, and art strong in SRV?* Nope!

Is everyone in law, public policy, counseling, or non-technical teaching low in SRV? Nope! *Trick questions?*

Yep!

To start off with, there are a wide-range of subfields within each of the broad career fields of engineering, art, and medicine, or law, counseling, and teaching. For example, *do you think that strong SRV may be more helpful to a structural engineer and that mid-to-low SRV may be more helpful to an electrical engineer?*

Or put another way, *how easy would structural engineering be to someone low in SRV?* Similarly, how easy would electrical engineering be to someone with mid-to-low SRV? Of course, we need to take other abilities into account, too. SRV will provide a foundation upon which to layer additional abilities.

An Example of SRV in the Life of a Lawyer

For the most part, law is a world of problem-solving using words. Being at the low end of the continuum on SRV may suit you well, especially if you are in constitutional, corporate, or family law.

If you are at the high end of the continuum (structural), and I'm in one of these practice areas, you might do well and still feel like there's something missing. There isn't a direct connection to the concrete, tangible world. However, if you apply your lawyering to real estate, project finance, or patent law, all the pieces have an opportunity to fall into place because now that you have that connection to something concrete (the piece of real estate or the gizmo being patented).

You see how this is working?

Engineering Jobs and Activities

Interestingly, when we look at entire career fields, there are many, many jobs and work activities.

For example, engineering. In addition to there being a wide range of engineering careers, there are ancillary jobs that pull on the intangible ability set such as human resources, account management, purchasing, and distribution within engineering firms. If you're a structural person, you might be thinking "yes, but that's not the real work." And if you're in one of these roles in an engineering firm and you are SRV is in the mid-to-low range you might be thinking "and their good work will never get to anyone if they don't hire the right people, develop relationships with their customers, keep an eye on the cost of purchasing materials and efficiently get everything to where it needs to go!"

SRV's Impact on Communication

In addition to enjoying the connection to the concrete world, those with strong SRV appreciate communication that includes concrete examples. When communicating a policy, procedure, or idea without that concrete example could mean the difference between buying or not buying into it. Conversely, those low in SRV relate best to the intangible aspects of those same policies, procedures, or ideas. In fact, sometimes if they think it, it IS real.

An Example: A Teacher's Curriculum Presentation

You are a teacher requesting the adoption of a new social sciences curriculum. To do this, you need to “sell” the new curriculum to the school administrators. You prepare yourself to present a proposal and focus on how the new curriculum engages the students, is appealing to the teachers because of the ease with which it can be used, and the parents are happy their sons and daughters aren't complaining about that class anymore.

While these aspects get the attention of a third of the administrators, another third are not convinced. You have not included anything “tangible” in your presentation. With this awareness, you may quickly figure out that you also need to show them the book, talk about how many other schools have successfully integrated the new curriculum, and the impact on test scores.

Adapted from HighlandsCo.com blog