

# Raven's Matrices: Unlock Fluid IQ

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Raven's Progressive Matrices (often referred to simply as Raven's Matrices) are non-verbal multiple choice measures of the reasoning (or, better, "meaning-making") component of Spearman's  $g$ , which is often referred to as general intelligence. The tests were originally developed by John C. Raven in 1936. In each test item, the subject is asked to identify the missing element that completes a pattern. Many patterns are presented in the form of a 4x4, 3x3, or 2x2 matrix, giving the test its name.

## Versions

The Matrices are available in three different forms for participants of different ability:

**Standard Progressive Matrices:** These were the original form of the matrices, first published in 1938. The booklet comprises five sets (A to E) of 12 items each (e.g., A1 through A12), with items within a set becoming increasingly difficult, requiring ever greater cognitive capacity to encode and analyze information. All items are presented in black ink on a white background.

**Coloured Progressive Matrices:** Designed for younger children, the elderly, and people with moderate or severe learning difficulties, this test contains sets A and B from the standard matrices, with a further set of 12 items inserted between the two, as set Ab. Most items are presented on a coloured background to make the test visually stimulating for participants. However the very last few items in set B are presented as black-on-white; in this way, if a subject exceeds the tester's expectations, transition to sets C, D, and E of the standard matrices is eased.

**Advanced Progressive Matrices:** The advanced form of the matrices contains 48 items, presented as one set of 12 (set I), and another of 36 (set II). Items are again presented in black ink on a white background, and become increasingly difficult as progress is made through each set. These items are appropriate for adults and adolescents of above-average intelligence.

In addition, "parallel" forms of the standard and coloured progressive matrices were published in 1998. This was to address the problem of the Raven's Matrices being too well-known in the general population. Items in the parallel tests have been constructed so that average solution rates to each question are identical for the classic and parallel versions. A revised version of the SPM - the Standard Progressive Matrices Plus - was published at the same time. This was based on the "parallel" version but, although the test was the same length, it had more difficult items in order to restore the discrimination that the original SPM had among more able adolescents and young adults when it was first published. This new test, developed with the aid of better sampling arrangements and developments in the procedures available to implement Item Response Theory, has turned out to have exemplary test properties.

J. C. Raven first published his Progressive Matrices in the United Kingdom in 1938. His three sons established Scotland-based test publisher J C Raven Ltd. in 1972. In 2004, Harcourt Assessment, Inc. a division of Harcourt Education acquired J C Raven Ltd. Harcourt was later acquired by

## Pearson Assessment

The Triple Nine Society, a high IQ society, accepts the Advanced Progressive Matrices form for one of their admission tests. They require a score of at least 32 out of 36 on or before December 31, 1999 on the RAPM. The International Society for Philosophical Enquiry (ISPE) similarly accepts the RAPM as a qualification for admission.

## Underlying factors

Raven's Progressive Matrices and Vocabulary tests were originally developed for use in research into the genetic and environmental origins of "cognitive ability". Raven felt that the tests commonly in use at that time were cumbersome to administer and the results difficult to interpret. Accordingly he set about developing simple measures of the two main components of Spearman's *g* (which is often wrongly equated with general intelligence). These two components are (1) the ability to think clearly and make sense of complexity, which is known as educative ability (from the Latin root "educere", meaning "to draw out") and (2) the ability to store and reproduce information, known as reproductive ability. Raven's tests of both were developed with the aid of what later became known as Item Response Theory. An example of one kind of IQ test item, modeled after items in the Raven's Progressive Matrices test.

## Uses of The Tests

Although the tests were developed for research purposes, because of their independence of language and reading and writing skills, and the simplicity of their use and interpretation, they quickly found widespread practical application. For example, all entrants to the British armed forces from 1942 onwards took a 20 minute version of the SPM. The routine administration of what became the Standard Progressive Matrices to all entrants (conscripts) to many military services throughout the world (including the Soviet Union) continued at least until the present century. It was by bringing together these data that Jim Flynn was able to place the intergenerational increase in scores beyond reasonable doubt. Although this has become known as the Flynn Effect it had, in fact, been noted earlier by, among others, Robert L. Thorndike working with the Stanford Binet test and John Raven with the RPM.)

Another extremely important application of the tests in research was the Minnesota Twin Family Study which established the first reliable estimates of the heritability of *g*. Attention should, however, be drawn to the social and political importance of an observation emerging from apparently low-level studies conducted to generate separate reference data (norms) for many countries and ethnic groups throughout the world. Because the RPM has impeccable test properties that are confirmed in study after study within these groups, it has ceased to be possible to attribute differences between ethnic groups to "test bias". The explanation has to be sought

elsewhere. And the implications for such things as educational and social policy are dramatic.

A 2007 study provided evidence that individuals with Asperger syndrome, a high-functioning autism spectrum disorder, score higher than other individuals on Raven's tests. Another 2007 study provided evidence that individuals with classic autism, a low-functioning autism spectrum disorder, score higher in Raven's tests than in Wechsler tests. In addition, the individuals with classic autism were providing correct answers to the Raven's test in less time than individuals without autism, although erring as often.

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