SMOOTHER SAILING IN YOUR TEACHING
BY KNOWING HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS BEST

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How To Choose A Cognitive Ability Test by Debbie Thompson

COGNITIVE ABILITY OR APTITUDE TESTS attempt to measure a student's cognitive reasoning abilities. They help you know "how" information is learned. (An achievement test measures what a student knows.) A cognitive ability or aptitude test measures how well a student can process information and solve problems, demonstrates capability for learning, and helps predict future academic success.

Many public and private schools use these tests for entry into their Academically Gifted programs.

The most common ability tests used in private and home schools are the Cognitive Abilities Test™ (CogAT®) and the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test® (OLSAT®). The CogAT is a companion product to the Iowa achievement test. The OLSAT is a companion to the Stanford achievement test.

CogAT

The CogAT paper version can be administered for grades 2 (must be at least 81 months old) through grade 12. The test consists of three parts: a verbal battery, a non-verbal battery, and a quantitative battery. The levels for the CogAT are as follows:

Level A: grades 2 and 3	Level E: grade 7
Level B: grade 4	Level F: grades 8 and 9
Level C: grade 5	Level G: grades 10 and 11
Level D: grade 6	Level H: grade 12

(A very few gifted programs might have CogATs done for Gr K and 1.)

CogAT

The CogAT 7 Online consists of verbal, quantitative and non-verbal sections with subtests: verbal analogies, sentence completion, verbal classification, number analogies, number puzzles, number series, figure matrices, paper folding, and figure classification. The levels for the CogAT7 Online test are:

Level 5/6: grade K	Level 12: grade 6
Level 7: grade 1	Level 13: grade 7
Level 8: grade 2	Level 14: grade 8
Level 9: grade 3	Level 15: grade 9
Level 10: grade 4	Level 16: grade 10
Level 11: grade 5	Level 17/18: grades 11-12

OLSAT

The OLSAT can also be administered beginning in second grade and through 12th grade, and consists of two sections, a verbal and a non-verbal section. The levels for the OLSAT are:

Level C: grade 2 (paper)	Level F: grades 6 – 8
Level D: grade 3 (paper)	Level G: grades 9 – 12
Level E: grades 4 – 5	

(A very few gifted programs might have OLSATs done for Gr K and 1.)

TEST FORMAT

Test Format:
Paper: CogAT: Gr 2 -12
Paper: OLSAT: Gr 2-12
Online: CogAT7: Gr K-12
Online: OLSAT: Gr 4-12

TEST LENGTH

CogAT - 90 minutes of working time.
OLSAT - exactly 40 minutes of working time.

TEST ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

The CogAT7 Online and OLSAT Online tests do not require parents and teachers to have a BA degree because TEA is proctoring the test online. The publishers of the paper version of the CogAT and OLSAT require the Test Administrator to have at least a Bachelor's degree in order to administer the test.

EXTRA REPORT

The CogAT (paper and online versions) scores can be input into an interactive website which then gives you an instructional strategies report. This report can help you understand your child's learning style, strengths, and weaknesses.

QUICKEST RESULTS

CogAT Online and OLSAT Online
   – machine score report: 24 hours
CogAT hand scoring option, (additional fee): results in 1 week

EMBARGOS

Sometimes a test publisher restricts the use of a test in a certain area. You cannot purchase the test if it is embargoed.

GROUP TESTING

CogAT (paper and online versions): all levels may test together.
OLSAT: Levels E through G (Gr 4 – 12) may test together.

While the CogAT and OLSAT tests measure cognitive ability, most states require that a true IQ test is supervised by a licensed psychologist. The most commonly used IQ tests are the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, (also known as the WISC test), the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities, and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children. These tests would allow you to assess if your child is working at their ability or below it, or above it. They usually cost quite a bit more than the CogAT or OLSAT but yield information concerning such things as short term memory, long term memory, cognitive fluency, visual-auditory learning, spatial relations and more. They help to diagnose learning differences, and are used in developing IEP or 504 plans for testing accommodations or modifications.

Triangle Education Assessments carries the CogAT and OLSAT tests in paper and online versions.

Debbie Thompson (www.TriangleEd.com) is Director at Triangle Education Assessments in Apex, NC, and helps thousands of homeschoolers each year with their achievement, cognitive, career and practice testing needs.