

4. Cognitive ability tests appear to generalize across cultures, with validities in Europe at least as high as those in the United States.

5. Beyond job performance, cognitive ability predicts other important criteria, including health-conscious behaviors (such as exercise), occupational prestige, income, steeper career success trajectories, and lower turnover.³³

These conclusions are not simply esoteric speculations from the ivory tower. They are based on hundreds of studies of hundreds of organizations employing hundreds of thousands of workers. Thus, whether an organization is selecting engineers, customer service representatives, or meat cutters, general mental ability is likely the single most valid method of selecting among applicants. A large-scale quantitative review of the literature suggested relatively high average validities for many occupational groups:³⁴

Manager, $\bar{r}_{xy} = .53$
Clerk, $\bar{r}_{xy} = .54$
Salesperson, $\bar{r}_{xy} = .61$
Protective professional, $\bar{r}_{xy} = .42$
Service worker, $\bar{r}_{xy} = .48$
Trades and crafts, $\bar{r}_{xy} = .46$
Elementary industrial worker, $\bar{r}_{xy} = .37$
Vehicle operator, $\bar{r}_{xy} = .28$
Sales clerk, $\bar{r}_{xy} = .27$

These results show that cognitive ability tests have some degree of validity for all types of jobs. The validity is particularly high for complex jobs (e.g., manager, engineer), but even for simple jobs the validity is positive. The same review also revealed that cognitive ability tests have very high degrees of validity in predicting training success— $\bar{r}_{xy} = .37$ for vehicle operators to $\bar{r}_{xy} = .87$ for protective professionals. This is due to the substantial learning component of training and the obvious fact that smart people learn more and adapt more readily to changing job conditions.³⁵

Whereas cognitive ability tests are more valid for jobs of medium complexity (e.g., police officers, salespeople) and high complexity (e.g., computer programmers, pilots), they are even valid for jobs of relatively low complexity (e.g., bus driver, factory worker). Why are cognitive ability tests predictive even for relatively simple jobs where intelligence would not appear to be an important attribute? The fact is that some degree of intelligence is important for *any* type of job.

Why do cognitive ability tests work so well in predicting job performance? Research has shown that most of the effect of cognitive ability tests is because intelligent employees learn more on the job and thus have greater job knowledge. As we noted earlier, evidence also suggests that intelligent employees adapt better to changing job conditions, an important skill in many workplaces.³⁶