



Child of Our Time

What's the animal?

This activity is something that you can do with children aged between about 3 and 11 years old. It's based on a test that psychologists have used to explore children's inhibitory control. It's a fun activity to do and it may give you a clearer idea of how your child thinks.

Get the test ready

First print out the download sheet 'What's the animals?'. Cut the sheet in two across the middle and then cut out the bottom set of 12 squares showing different 'hybrid' animal body/head combinations, and shuffle them.

Put the half of the sheet with the four animal pictures on it, the duck, cow, sheep and pig, facing your child.

Check that your child can name the animals

Point to each of the four animals, one at a time, and ask your child to name each one. Then pick up the sheet and put it away.

Give the test

Next, take the first 'hybrid' animal picture from the shuffled set and put it in front of your child.

Ask them, clearly, 'Tell me quickly, what is the animal body?'

If they get it wrong, which is quite likely on this first attempt, tell them what the right name is for the body. Don't criticise them if they get it wrong; the test is deliberately confusing. It is much better to joke about it and say how hard it is!

Repeat this for all the twelve hybrid pictures, one at a time.

Making sense of how your child responds

Some children may find this a very easy task, but that's unlikely; it's difficult even for adults. One thing to stress is that this is NOT an intelligence test. What it is trying to measure is the ability that psychologists call 'inhibitory control', and that develops quite slowly over many years.

Some children may not do very well at first, but once they get the idea, they may improve as the test goes on. Others may find the mental effort actually makes them do worse as they go through the pictures. But whatever they do, it should give you some new insights into your child's mind and how it works.

Turn the tables

Why not get your child to test you? That will help them to get an insight into how your mind works!

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