

Parent Brief



Spotting your child's interests makes a big difference in how your child turns out. When we watch kids in a play situation, it's intriguing to see the sorts of activities and equipment they naturally gravitate to. Some head straight outside to the swings and slides, yelling and squealing all the way. Others might decide the dress up corner is the place to be because that's where their friends are, while others will happily sit at a table with craft materials, talking to no-one in particular, but comprehensively engaged in what they're creating. Every kid is unique and so are their interests...

Six different categories of interests

When it comes to kids and interests, psychologist Dr John Holland discovered that their interests can be described by six categories: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional. It's important that we, as parents, learn to recognise our children's pattern of interests to help us guide and encourage them in their early learning, play and hobbies, through to their choice of subjects at school, university courses and eventually career paths.

Can you spot which interests describe your child?

Some children's interests are more clearly defined than others, but see if you can locate the two or three that most closely resemble your child.

- **Realistic:** the down and dirty kids. They enjoy tinkering with tools and machines, pulling things apart, working outside or growing vegetables. They tend to be honest, practical, persistent, have common sense, be self-reliant, value monetary rewards and like to see tangible results for their efforts.
- **Investigative:** the maths, scientific, hang out in the library kids. They ask questions, investigate in a logical fashion, read books on science and work with numbers. They draw charts and graphs

and keep budgets and value the acquisition of knowledge and learning.

- **Artistic:** the nonconformists, hate cleaning up their room kids. These kids love poetry, painting, drawing and sculpting. They're often disorganised, emotional, impulsive, impractical, intuitive and prefer creative ideas and self-expression.
- **Social:** the meet new people, make new friends kids. They like to be involved and helping, work on group projects and do volunteer work. They are characterised by patience, understanding, warmth, generosity, cooperation, and good interpersonal (as opposed to technical) skills.
- **Enterprising:** the 'sell refrigerators to the Eskimos' kids. They're verbally persuasive, enjoy people and good times. They are adventurous, ambitious, argumentative, attention getting, energetic, impulsive, optimistic, self-confident and talkative! Risk-taking holds appeal.
- **Conventional:** the orderly, behind the scenes kids. They're happy to organise, be secretary, prepare food, plan a dinner. These kids are conscientious, thrifty, inflexible, obedient, persistent and practical, and tend to develop advanced clerical or numerical skills.

Matching up

The better able you are to match your children's developing interests with activities, programs, classes and areas of study that accommodate their interests, the more satisfied and successful they will be.

Consider the following examples of activities that apply to the six categories of individual interests discovered by Holland:

- **Realistic:** mechanical crafts, cooking, woodworking, model making, gardening, animals.
- **Investigative:** animals and their preservation, gardening, science, flying, nature, board games.
- **Artistic:** art, music, craft, food, entertainment, performing, dancing, collecting.
- **Social:** variety of sports, social games, performing, crafts, biking, skiing, card games, travel.
- **Enterprising:** performing, entertainment, business, games of chance, cooking, investing.
- **Conventional:** collecting (tools, toys, cards, stamps), needlework, craft, card and computer games and apps.

Know thy child

No two kids are the same and no two kids' interests are the same. As parents, we also need to bear in mind that our interests won't necessarily match those of our kids. The trick to encouraging our kids to achieve, express their talents and just be themselves, is locate the programs and courses, based on their pattern of interests, that will give them the most pleasure and the greatest learning potential. As the old saying goes, 'round pegs don't (and never will), fit into square holes' and when we match up a round peg with a round hole, the peg feels very comfortable in its own space, doing its own thing.