

the materials they are given are the best and only resources they have to work with. It never occurred to the group of students expressing concerns about their course that they might pursue other materials or even other ways of experiencing the materials on their own.

I was recently in an online course that definitely didn't meet my expectations as a student. I expressed legitimate concerns about the unreliability of the learning management system (LMS) that was being used and that the materials used throughout the course to assess our learning (mostly quizzes) were filled with errors.

But there were other concerns I had that I could fix myself. For example, my top-ranking intelligence is linguistic and I would definitely say I prefer reading learning materials over watching videos. The materials offered in the course were almost exclusively video lectures supported by a PowerPoint slide deck. I emailed the course creators and asked if there were transcripts available (and there were) and I asked if they recommended any books as additional resources that would complement the course nicely (they did not). I searched for written materials on my own—being careful to select materials created by trustworthy organizations—and found content that did help me understand the content I was studying in a different and more meaningful way.

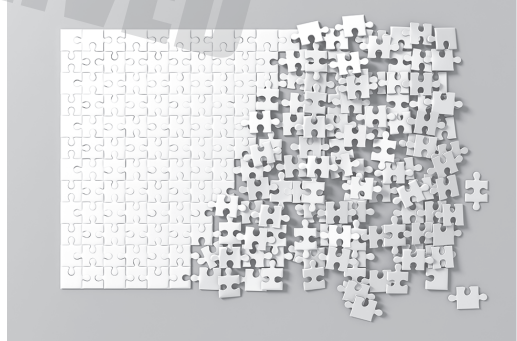
Perhaps most importantly, I didn't resign myself to working with what I was offered. I didn't find everything I was looking for, but by my simply asking, I was given the transcripts (which I found incredibly helpful). And by searching for other resources, I even made helpful connections that I was able to use as a professional once I finished my course. Being a resourceful learner has a wide range of benefits.

This idea of resourcefulness is the heart of this book. Just completing the assessment isn't going to improve how well you understand the exam content. Reading the book alone won't do it either. It's up to you to make and follow your unique plan.

EXISTENTIAL

If you scored high in the existential intelligence, you probably have a reputation for asking questions. And that isn't always a bad thing, right? People with a high ranking existential intelligence are often focused on the big picture, so if they join a conversation during a planning phase or engage with someone solely focused on practical application, they are likely to throw on their brakes and ask for more information before proceeding.

In the moment, that may feel challenging—both for the person asking for details and for the people around them. And there may be times when reviewing strategy to the extent they've requested is unnecessary and even a waste of time. But often the person



© AlexandrBognat/Shutterstock.com

looking at the big picture is contributing a tremendous amount to the learning conversation by helping a group or individuals reach a deeper level of understanding and even identify potential challenges early on, saving everyone a headache in the future.

Why didn't I become an archivist or librarian?

If you scored off the chart in this category—or even if reflecting on your life, you remember enjoying digging through history and contemplating the answers to challenging theoretical questions—you may wonder why you didn't end up in one of the career paths listed in your *AchieveWORKS Intelligences Report*.

The culture you grew up in, role models in your life, career opportunities, and even singular events all come together to influence your career path. In fact, some of the people we've talked to end up completing their certification because somewhere along the way one of these influences pushed them in a direction that wasn't quite what they wanted to do or was only a temporary interest. Many people realize what they want to do with their career late enough in life that they already completed formal education or gained significant experience on another path. A certification is a great way to change gears and get back to what you want to do with your career.

At this point, there's no value in regretting choices you made earlier in your education or career. In fact, if you do realize you'd like to move in a different direction, a positive first step may be to look at your previous experience and identify transferrable skills. If, for example, you're working as a customer service representative, but you've always wanted to be a lab technician, you may think your work experience may not be able to help you. But why not? Working in customer service, you gather data, consider facts, draw conclusions, and determine next steps for a variety of situations. Those skills are at least somewhat related to the talents needed to become a successful lab technologist—so you may have more transferrable skills than you realized.

What is the Existential Intelligence?

Like the other two assessments you completed, the *AchieveWORKS Intelligences Report* provided you with a great deal of information to consider. You may even feel like it's too much to think through all at once! Working through this portion of the book to complete your unique study plan will help you focus on the content that is most meaningful and, most importantly, how to translate that content into action.

To begin, it's important to focus on two aspects of the report. First, what does “existential intelligence” really mean—and what does it mean to you? The definition provided in the assessment is listed below and we encourage you to read it again and consider what the existential intelligence looks like in your learning environment.

“Existential intelligence is the ability to see the big picture in everything—the relationships and connections, vastness and limitations, and how everything fits together. This intelligence is used in considering questions about our existence, such as purpose, life, death, and our place in the universe.”

Next, read the traits associated with the existential intelligence. These are listed on the second page of your report and again below for easy reference. Remember that,

like all of the information you've received, not every trait may seem to fit you perfectly. But before dismissing the idea entirely, be sure to think through the idea thoroughly.

- Putting details together to understand the big picture such as in a textbook unit, career plan or game strategy
- Understanding different ways to look at things such as in debates, studying other cultures or social projects
- Looking into questions about human existence such as in philosophy, ethics, the arts, religion and spirituality
- Connecting different ideas into something new and creative such as in research, entrepreneurship and strategy development
- Sense of place within the community and the larger world

Creating your learning plan will involve integrating information from your *AchieveWORKS Personality Self Discovery Report*, and your *AchieveWORKS Learning and Productivity Report* in addition to the traits listed above.

Looking Back

Think about activities that have been beneficial for you in various education environments in the past. Can you remember a time when the details of a project at school or work were difficult to remember until one day—by accident or intentionally—you gained access to the broader application of what you were working on? Have you ever started learning about something new and naturally tied it back to previous knowledge—feeling a sudden “click” when you were able to link the new information to a broader topic?

Consider at least three learning activities you experienced—good or bad. Identify your gut reaction to how effective they were for you, using a scale of 1 (not helpful) to 5 (very effective) in the past. Then briefly describe an example of a time when you experienced that learning activity.

Thinking about your own experiences—even if they were from a long time ago—will help the suggested activities in this chapter be more meaningful to you. It may even help you get a little creative with your approach and make the perfect adjustments for your plan.

What if I want to use my existential intelligence more often?

One fun, natural side effect of the process of *really* thinking about how you interact with the world is how often it brings new hobbies, volunteer opportunities, or work projects into your life. For example, now that you've considered the extent to which you enjoy existential considerations, maybe an interest in history or genealogy has been reignited. Or you might now be considering taking a class to learn more library sciences.

Whether you explore a new hobby, volunteer activity, or even a new project at work, understanding your preferred intelligence can help you in many aspects of your life. We're focused on helping you prepare for your certification, but we hope you take these new insights even further!

Learning Activity	1	2	3	4	5	This reminds me of the time . . . (describe the goal of the activity and the environment)
Application					X	We did a survival exercise in school once and to this day I still remember the recommendation for stabilizing an injured person and then getting them to safety. The funny this is, I read how to do it before class and kind of understood it, but the teachers asked for a volunteer to be the “patient” so others could practice implementing the technique. I volunteered and learned more when I experienced the treatment than when I read about it or provided it myself!
	1	2	3	4	5	
	1	2	3	4	5	
	1	2	3	4	5	

Consider the Other Intelligences

As you read in your *AchieveWORKS Intelligences Report*, every person has the ability to tap into every intelligence. We talk about your top ranked intelligence simply to help you make choices that will make studying easier. You don’t have to abandon things you enjoy—especially if they help you study! But we hope you’ll take a look at your entire study plan with fresh eyes.

As important as your top ranked intelligence is, it’s a good idea to consider your second and third ranked options as well. In many cases, considering a second or third-ranked intelligence may lead to an enhanced activity. For example, if your top ranked intelligences were (1) Existential and (2) Musical, you may realize that the recommendation for the existential intelligence to review chapter headings and understand the key messages within a book before reading it would pair nicely with the recommendation to find a rhythm or cadence to your reading once you begin to dig into the details.

STUDY TECHNIQUE #1

ALTERNATE VIEWS OF EXAM CONTENT

You read in your questionnaire that people who rank high in the existential intelligence value understanding the big picture. To understand how the small pieces fit together and why they matter, it's important to them to see every piece of the puzzle. Then the individual contribution makes more sense. When applying this to exam content, it's important to remember that details will be easier to remember if you understand how they fit in the big picture.

“Not everyone steps back to seek the connections that you do. However, existential intelligence can help with understanding the “big picture”. It helps you to understand the connections between details and the larger issue, so each piece has meaning. Seeing these connections can improve your motivation for completing school work, for example, because you know the point of the assignment, how it relates to your other school work, and even how it benefits your educational development as a whole. Therefore, it is helpful for you to spend the time to understand how a topic or task fits into the larger picture before you begin.”

With this in mind, there is often an opportunity to look at an exam concept from a new angle. For example, if you were a nurse learning how to complete a series of steps with a patient, you might consider the experience from the patient's perspective. If you were an architect memorizing the details of site planning, you might consider the project manager's viewpoint.

This expanded view of the concept provides you with the opportunity to see different reasons why elements of the exam content may be important. It may also introduce you to emotional elements—stress, risk, etc.—that will not only make exam content more memorable, there is potential for you to be a more well-rounded practitioner in your field of expertise.

SETUP AND IMPLEMENTATION

Depending on what exam you're preparing for and what content you're exploring, gathering the right information will vary greatly. In situations like the examples in the introductory paragraph where there are other people with whom you can “trade places” in a given scenario, the best way to identify a different viewpoint may be easy. If there isn't a person or group you can pretend to be, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why is this concept important enough to be covered on the exam? Putting yourself in the position of the exam creators may help you uncover why the material is important in your industry. Common associations may be related to what could potentially go wrong, or common mistakes.
- How would you explain the idea to someone who had absolutely no understanding of your industry, the exam or any of the materials covered? Getting back to basics and working in a “teaching mode” can help you identify important pieces

30 Chapter 3 What Are Intelligences?

of information and even uncover ideas you don't understand well enough to explain to someone else.

WHO ARE THE KEY PLAYERS?

When you find a process, idea, or concept you want to experience from a different viewpoint, a logical starting point is to establish at least one other viewpoint you can consider. Ask yourself, "Who else is involved in this situation?"

In medical scenarios, it may be → a patient or another medical professional

In business scenarios, it may be → a client, vendor, coworker, or regulatory official

In construction, it may be → coworker(s), site managers, or auditor

It's rare that in your work environment, there isn't any other person associated with the work you're doing. You may have never realized it before, but even if the interaction occurs at a different time than the work you're doing (e.g., if you're considering the point of view of the exam creator), there is always another way to look at the concepts you're working through.

HOW CAN YOU BEST UNDERSTAND THEIR PERSPECTIVE?

In some situations, the alternate perspective may be obvious—maybe even something you're already aware of. But if it isn't or if you want to confirm that your assumptions are complete and accurate, consider these resources:

1. Do an internet search for recent blogs or articles written on the topic. Remember you're looking for perspective, so some of your best resources may be content written by professionals in your industry who are sharing their story. Check to make sure they are a trusted resource, but otherwise stay open to blog posts and opinion pieces as well as informational articles.
2. Interview someone who has a different perspective. This is a great exercise because you can prepare a set of questions you believe will help you understand their perspective, but you can also ask them to share what they think is important.
3. Pair up with someone else studying for the same exam. It's likely you've had different experiences, so you can learn from each other. As you research to fill in the gaps, you can also benefit from the different interpretations you may have of materials as well as your unique creative approaches.

Whatever approach you take, we encourage you to have fun! Post your progress on social media, ask friends for additional ideas, and—most importantly—take time to reflect on your experience on your own or with a group. Thinking, talking, and writing about what you learned will solidify the benefits of the exercise.

RISK

Putting yourself in someone else's shoes can not only be a great trick for improving how well you understand the content, it can also make studying more fun. Countless students have formed meaningful relationships within their industries and engaged in hilarious role plays all in the name of studying for an exam! However, there's also a risk that you could set yourself up for too much fun—also known as justifiable distractions. Here are a few ways you can make sure you stay on track.

1. **Watch out for rabbit holes.** As you dig for alternative perspectives, you'll likely uncover interesting stories and semi-related content that might seem helpful (or at least more interesting than your study materials), but make sure you don't lose focus on the material you need to learn. One way to keep yourself in check is to write down exactly what you're researching and keep it in your line of sight as a constant reminder.
2. **Only be as elaborate as you need to be.** If considering how a patient would feel will help you better understand an exam concept, you can walk yourself through the alternate reality in your own living room—you may even convince someone else to play along with you! There's no reason to drive out to a local hospital or set up an elaborate medical station in your home. Do what you can to make the experience realistic, but be reasonable in how much time and effort you put into setting up the scenario. Don't let creating your environment become an excuse to avoid studying.
3. **Choose the content you explore wisely.** This approach doesn't work for every concept you're trying to understand. If, for example, you simply need to memorize 30 key terms, you won't benefit by taking time to ask an expert why the terms are important. It's basic vocabulary—you just need to know it. This is best for memorizing steps, processes, and complex ideas.

STUDY TECHNIQUE #2

SQ3R

Because of your high ranking in existential intelligence, you likely had a recommendation in your profile to consider the SQ3R technique. Since there's a good chance you've never heard of the approach—or it's at least been a long time since you've explored the idea—we're going to walk through the technique step by step and discuss why it might be a great fit for you.

SETUP AND IMPLEMENTATION

SQ3R is a method for reading that was created more than 75 years ago by Francis P. Robinson. The name refers to the five steps the student will follow: survey, question, read, recite, review. The approach was originally designed for reading textbooks, but it's been adapted for various other educational environments across a wide age range. We're going to look at how it can be used with various standard exam materials.

- Survey—skim the content to gain a general understanding of what's covered
- Question—identify and note what questions you have about the material
- Read—read the content employing whatever reading techniques you have identified as helpful (e.g., reading out loud, highlighting key points, etc.)
- Recite—answer your questions from the second bullet while you read
- Review—circle back and reread the answers to the questions you identified and research and questions that weren't resolved

We'll start by looking at how you'd apply these steps to the exam textbook you're likely working with. (Whether it's one book or a compilation of resources, the idea is to start with written materials since that is the most likely resource that will be present for every exam.) But from there, we'll stretch the SQ3R a bit and apply the technique to other resource types. We encourage you to review the approaches we've outlined, but also to consider how you could use SQ3R with other tools you have access to for your unique exam.

EXAM TEXTBOOK

Survey—Most textbooks will be organized by headings and subheadings—the perfect design for surveying the material! Make a note of each heading, subheading, and other bold text (like keywords or important phrases). It's also important to highlight any charts or graphs and the concepts they explore.

Question—After you skim the material and have a general idea of what you'll be looking at, jot down a few questions you have about the materials. Some people get really caught up in wondering how many questions they should have—and there's no right answer. If it helps, I would say you should have at least three (no matter how long a chapter is) but if you've exceeded a dozen you may be exploring too much content in one sitting. If you do find yourself with a large number of questions right from the start, ask yourself if the chapter is really content heavy and should be split into smaller pieces.

Questions you ask may include but are not limited to:

- Definitions of terms (even if you think you know, you may find some you want to clarify)
- Examples of concepts or ideas (a great way to make something you need to memorize more meaningful)
- Big picture associations (especially for the existential intelligence, understanding *why* something is important will help you understand the material in a meaningful way)

Read—Now that you've skimmed and thought about the content, you have the opportunity to read it. Before reading, consider your study environment and make sure everything is set up in a way that best supports your reading comprehension. For example, lighting, temperature, and the comfort of the chair you're using is important—as well as being in a place where you can read out loud as needed (if that is your preference).

Recite—Answer the questions you identified. Depending on the study preferences you've uncovered, you may want to write down your answers or discuss them with someone else (in-person or online).

Review—After the first four steps, you've essentially completed a study guide you have the opportunity to review. Answer any questions that remain (or move them to a different chapter if you discover their content is a better fit for another section of your study materials). Explore the content you've created—either by reading your work or by discussing what you uncovered with others.

VIDEOS

Survey—Depending on how the video or video series is designed, you may have several opportunities to survey the material.

- Always check the accompanying notes and descriptions for the video—especially if it is a series. Oftentimes there is an outline available that will provide you with an overview of the material covered.
- Look for external references, related videos, or other materials mentioned. That will provide you with clues as to the content covered—as well additional resources you may want to look at later.
- Determine the design of the video if possible. For example, the video may begin with an overview of the content or be one of a series, so you may learn that they all begin by introducing information and then sharing examples that explore each topic in greater detail. Knowing that, you can watch the beginning of the video and determine what content will be covered.

Question—From your survey, you may be able to identify quite a few questions you can anticipate. With video, there are a few technical considerations you'll need to consider, though, as you prepare to address the questions you may have.

Questions you ask may include but are not limited to:

- If a graph or demonstration appears that I'd like to review later, what will be the best way to capture it? A few options would be using the print screen feature on your computer or simply noting the minute mark so you can return to it later. But it's important to understand the tools you're using before viewing video so you can make the best possible use of them in the moment.
- Definitions of terms (even if you think you know, you may find some you want to clarify)
- Examples of concepts or ideas (a great way to make something you need to memorize more meaningful)
- Big picture associations (especially for the existential intelligence, understanding *why* something is important will help you understand the material in a meaningful way)

Read—For the videos, “reading” equates to watching the video. Now is your time to actually view the videos in their entirety. Take notes, pause, and re-watch content as needed.

Recite—Answer the questions you identified. Depending on the study preferences you've uncovered, you may want to write down your answers or discuss them with someone else. If the videos you're watching are on a public site, you may also have the opportunity to participate in an online discussion. Feel free to respond to questions others have posed or ask questions of your own.

Review—After the first four steps, you've essentially completed a study guide you have the opportunity to review. Answer any questions that remain (or move them to a different chapter if you discover their content is a better fit for another section of your study materials). Explore the content you've created—either by reading your work or by discussing what you uncovered with others.

PRACTICE EXAMS

Preparing for a challenging exam can be daunting and—whether you realize it or not—you may be tempted to read a practice exam instead of actually completing it because you’re afraid you won’t do well. Unless you have unlimited access to practice exams (an electronic test bank, for example, that can generate new tests as often as you need them), be careful not to waste your practice exams this way.

Survey—Review the exam categories and ensure that you understand as much about the process as possible. Oftentimes, information like what percentage of the exam relates to various topics is available, as well how the exam is structured (multiple choice questions, skills tests, etc.).

Question—Using a practice exam (ideally one you’ve already completed), rewrite each question. If possible, have a partner complete the same exercise and swap exams once you’ve finished. Not only will you be more likely to remember the content after reworking it, you’ll also have the opportunity to complete and then grade another practice exam.

Read—Once you have access to a practice exam you have completed, try reading through the questions with the correct answers marked. This is an easy way for you to read a challenging question and then immediately see the correct answer.

Recite—Answer any additional questions that came up while you were reworking or reading your practice test questions.

Review—After the first four steps, you’ve created a nice overview—a more chaotic study guide than you have with the other approaches. With the other materials, the content you’ve created flows in a logical order. Learning from practice test questions likely means the information appears somewhat sporadically—a great way to test your understanding of the material.

RISK

Identifying and making the most of patterns in your study plan is primarily completed at the start of your plan—when you map out how you’ll approach your materials. But you may also find small opportunities within the materials to learn content more deeply and with greater ease. At any stage there are potential challenges. Consider the following risks to be sure your study plan is successful:

1. **When using practice exams to study, be careful not to miss the important concepts because you ended up memorizing the specific question.** I was teaching a course once where students prepared to complete an exam and had access to practice exams online. I eventually learned that one student was using those practice exams exclusively to study when I asked about a concept and she answered that she could “only remember that the answer is “b” on the practice exam.” She couldn’t remember the material; she could only visualize the layout of the practice exam question.

STUDY TECHNIQUE #3

MAPPING

You read about the importance of understanding the big picture in your *Achieve-WORKS Intelligences Report*, but have you considered how you can see the big picture of your exam? A technique called *mind mapping* can help you take all of your exam content and organize it in a single image that emphasizes the relationship between all of the content points—the perfect set up for the existential intelligence.

SETUP AND IMPLEMENTATION

Mind mapping is a technique used by a lot of different people for a variety of purposes, so there are quite a few valuable resources available for free online. We recommend checking out mindmapping.com if you'd like more information about the mind mapping technique. To get started using this technique to prep for your exam, complete the following steps.

1. Identify your core learning objectives. These are probably available through your exam provider. If not, look at chapter titles and/or headings, module names, or the organization of any exam prep materials and extract basic themes.
2. From each core learning objective, identify the key points you need to remember. Continue to use a word or short phrase to represent the idea you need to remember.
3. Add additional details to the key points as needed.

Each core learning objective, key point, and additional details will look different. Be careful not to add too much detail—just enough for you to understand and remember the key points. You can also use images (especially if you are more likely to remember a picture) or reference an external resource as needed.

Your mind map can be used in your study plan in several ways. First, the simple act of creating your map will help you organize your thoughts, research additional

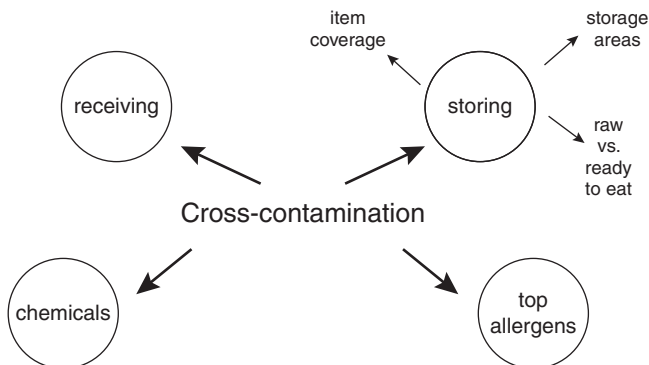


Figure 3.1 Sample Mind Map

details as needed, and uncover areas where you should spend additional time studying. Second, because of your existential intelligence, seeing how all of the information on the exam fits together will help you retain more information in general. It is a great study tool as you create it, when you explore topics in greater detail, and at the end of your study plan when you are quizzing yourself to see what you know.

Risk

Mind mapping is a pretty low-risk study tool, but just like all of our recommendations there are places where you can get off track. While it's unlikely you'd do any harm to your study routine, there is a fairly significant risk of not using mind mapping techniques as effectively as possible. Check out the following risk categories and consider which ones may apply to your study environment.

1. **Be careful not to over-simplify.** Mind maps use short phrases to help you see the big picture, but in some cases you may need more detail. If that's the case, the content may not be a great fit for a mind map. You may also just need an additional reference. Maybe you can add a footnote that says, "See XYZ document for details." However you approach this challenge, be mindful not to tell yourself you fully understand a concept if there is a level of detail you haven't mastered yet.
2. **Be careful not to add too many details.** If you find yourself creating a mind map that has so much content it seems like you've copied all of the exam prep material verbatim, there's a good chance you're missing some of the biggest benefits associated with mind mapping. Organizing the material in a way that makes sense to you will always help, as will the act of sketching out the content. But if your notes are lengthy, detailed, or hard to read, you will struggle to recall the important points when you visualize your mind map.
3. **Create logical groups.** Creating a mind map isn't just about taking a list and making it into a picture. The text, images, and organization have to mean something to you. (And in some cases, the organization you choose may only be meaningful to you.) Make sure the levels and points are logically connected in your mind or the mind mapping process simply won't help!
4. **Keep it clean.** You may not get your mind map quite right the first time—and you're almost guaranteed to have additions as you go along. If those additions, changes, etc. begin to clutter your mind map, consider rewriting once you're confident the majority of the edits are complete.

INTERESTED IN CHECKING OUT A FEW OTHER IDEAS? TRY THESE!

LOGICAL MATHEMATICAL, TECHNIQUE 3: UNDERSTAND THE "WHY"

Like the Logical Mathematical Intelligence, you may benefit from taking the time to understand why you're studying the content on your exam.

SPATIAL, TECHNIQUE 2: DESIGN ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR STUDY GROUPS

It may sound like too much work, but give it a shot! Designing study groups for your peers could be an amazing way for you to absorb information.