

Life's Extremes: Math vs. Language

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LiveScience:

Do you know what “abecedarian” means? What about the solution to 250×11 ?

Most people would agree they are better at verbal or math subjects in school, as grades usually do attest. Highly intelligent individuals often do well in both subjects, and may know the answers to both questions above, lickety-split, while less intelligent people can struggle. But a minority of us excels in the language department and bombs at mathematics, or vice versa.

(As an adjective, abecedarian refers to something relating to the alphabet; 2,750 is the solution to the equation.)

These extremes in ability speak (or equate) to the very makeup of our brains. “The brain systems for maths and language are quite different,” said Brian Butterworth, emeritus professor of cognitive neuropsychology at University College London, using British English’s dialect for “math.” “So perhaps it is not surprising that these two capacities are rather independent.”

Read the whole story: [*LiveScience*](#)