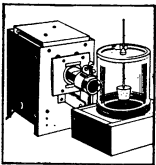


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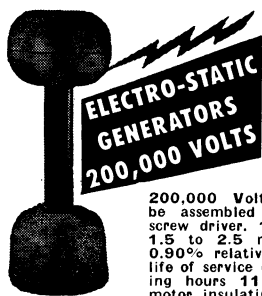
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PSYCHOLOGY

'Perceptual Quotient' Devised for Children

➤ ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS may soon be using a "perceptual quotient," or PQ, to detect children with retarded perceptual abilities.

Like the familiar intelligence quotient, the IQ, this newly standardized PQ compares a child's level of ability with that of his peers'.

But while a low IQ score is accepted as a valid explanation of a child's lack of progress in school, a low PQ score indicates that a child needs help.

Researchers at the Marianne Frostig School of Educational Therapy, Los Angeles, who developed and standardized the perceptual quotient, found that above average PQ scores do not generally indicate future achievement in school, as high IQ scores do.

However, children in kindergarten and first grade with low PQ scores are likely to have difficulty in learning to read and to be poorly adjusted to school.

These early difficulties may be overcome by remedial training and readiness school programs, the researchers stated.

The sub-tests used to evaluate a child's PQ deal with different areas of visual perception. In each test the child attempts a series of carefully graded tasks.

To assess eye-hand coordination, for ex-

ample, the child must draw straight and curved lines between increasingly narrow boundaries, or draw a straight line to a target.

Similar tasks have been developed to measure perception of figure-ground relationships, form constancy, position in space and spatial relationships.

Researchers Phyllis Maslow and Marianne Frostig of the Frostig School, D. Welty Lefever of the University of Southern California at Los Angeles, and John R. B. Whittlesey of the Brain Research Institute, University of California at Los Angeles, reported their work in Perceptual and Motor Skills Monograph Supplement, 1964.

The researchers believe that testing these different abilities enables evaluation of more specific assets and liabilities and study of the relationships between these abilities, school achievement and personality measurements.

• Science News Letter, 86:302 November 7, 1964

Nature Note

The Opossum

➤ THE VIRGINIA OPOSSUM, *Didelphis*, is the only pouched animal living wild in the United States.

A member of the marsupial order, the female opossum has a warm, fur-lined pouch on her abdomen into which creep the tiny babies as soon as they are born, only 12 days after conception. At this time the babies weigh about 1/15th of an ounce—over a dozen could fit into one teaspoon. As soon as the babies struggle into the pouch, they attach themselves securely onto one of her 13 nipples which are no bigger than the head of a pin. If there are more than 13 children in the brood, the excess soon starve to death.

The surviving babies grow rapidly. In about a week they are ten times as large as they were at birth. When they are ten weeks old, they start to emerge from their snug pouch and climb onto their mother's back, holding tightly to her long hair. After about 14 weeks, they are independent and on their own.

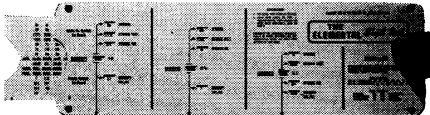
When fully grown, the opossum is an unattractive creature, about the size of a cat, with a pointed rat's face, naked ears and long black or grey hair growing over a dense, creamy-white undercoat. Its tail, bare or scaly and furred at the base, is prehensile and can be used as a fifth paw to hang from a tree or hold onto food.

Considered one of the ugliest and stupidest of creatures in the United States, the opossum has the peculiar habit of "playing possum," or going into a coma-like state of shock when frightened and rolling over as if dead.

Yet this unattractive tree-climbing nocturnal animal is aiding research, for scientists are able to observe the tiny babies at different stages of their embryonic development. Other animal embryos develop inside the mother's uterus and hence are inaccessible.

• Science News Letter, 86:302 November 7, 1964

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