

The Mensa Interview Cheat Sheet

Occasionally, Local Group officers get the opportunity to take to the airwaves (podcasts, Facebook Live, what-have-you) to sing Mensa's praises. While everyone has his or her own reasons for joining — *You did decide to join, didn't you?* — preparation and clear, consistent messaging will help your group get its message out effectively and reflect positively on Mensa as an organization.

Here's a home-run example: [WBT's Scott Fitzgerald interviews Dr. Jack Freund](#), Charlotte/Blue Ridge Mensa's Assistant Local Secretary. Dr. Freund's responses are textbook — he's friendly, informative, and self-effacing.

To help you prepare for your own interview, below you'll find a number of questions Mensan interviewees often receive and suggestions on how one might respond.

What is Mensa?

Mensa is a social organization for people who score in the top 2 percent on any accepted standardized test.

Why would you join?

Many of our members feel they don't receive the level of intellectual stimulation they'd like to have in their everyday lives. Joining Mensa gives them an opportunity to ponder, discuss, and debate everything from the serious to the silly. This community supports each other with camaraderie, challenging intellectual interactions, and support for families with gifted youth. And through our philanthropic arm, the Mensa Foundation, members help provide the public with scholarship programs, and teaching tools, and other programs to support the intellectually gifted.

How do you join?

First you have to qualify, and there are two ways to do so. You can either take the official Mensa Admissions Test, administered by a trained Mensa member, or you can submit scores from an intelligence test you may have taken in your past. You know, the GMAT, LSAT, or maybe when you tested into Gifted and Talented as a kid.

What are Mensans (Mensa members, more likely) like?

We run the gamut: Members of American Mensa range in age from 2 to 106; they include engineers, homemakers, teachers, actors, athletes, students, and CEOs. But we all share one defining trait: high intelligence. There are some common characteristics among Mensans, though: **We're intensely curious.** It should come as no surprise that, generally, Mensans hold degrees at a higher rate than the general public. **We're lifelong learners**, and discovering a new interest can often drive us to learn everything we can about it. **We find puzzles irresistible.** Solving a mystery brings, for many Mensans, immeasurable joy. It's just a part of our personalities.

What IQ do you have to have to be a member?

Anyone who scores in the top 2 percent on an accepted, standardized intelligence test qualifies for Mensa. Because tests are normed differently, the actual score for admission can vary from test to test. For example, on the Stanford Binet, you would need an IQ of 132 for admission, but on the Wechsler tests, you would need an IQ of 130. For a list of tests scores we accept for membership qualification, you can visit our website at americanmensa.org/testscores.

Can you prepare for an intelligence test?

There is no way to study for an intelligence test. The best thing you can do to prepare is to be well rested and eat a nutritious meal prior to testing.

How many members does Mensa have?

American Mensa has more than 50,000 members. Worldwide, there are more than 130,000 members of Mensa representing more than 100 countries, with the Mensa International headquarters in London.

What does Mensa stand for?

Mensa is not an acronym. It is from the Latin words for mind, table, and month, suggesting a monthly meeting of minds around a table.

What constitutes a “genius”?

There is no scientific definition of “genius.” About 75 years ago, it was established that an IQ of 140 qualified a person as a genius, but that figure has no scientific merit.

Intelligence quotient is an antiquated term that was developed nearly 80 years ago. The equation divided mental age by chronological age. This method was dropped 60 years ago. Today, intelligence is measured by a person’s relative position in a group that combines geographical and age cohorts.

ANSWERS TO POTENTIALLY NEGATIVE QUESTIONS ABOUT MENSA

The questions and answers below are just suggestions. You will have your own positive answers if you give the questions a little thought, but you might want to think about your answers before your interview (especially if the interview will be conducted live).

Isn’t Mensa elitist? Don’t you hold yourself up as better than (smarter than) everyone else?

Mensa is the least “elitist” organization I know.

Mensa has only one requirement for membership: you must have scored in the top 2 percent of the general population on a standardized intelligence test once in your life. Once you meet that requirement, no one can keep you out. That would make any organization with an “admission committee” more elitist than Mensa.

Mensa does not require that someone sponsor you, nor do you have to attend a certain number of meetings for membership.

Mensa has no racial, religious, ethnic, sexual, political, economic, national, professional, special-interest, age-based, or other barriers to membership (other than the required intelligence test score). How many other groups can make that claim?

Our members have scored in the top 2 percent of general population on a standardized intelligence test, but that does not mean they think they're better or smarter than other people. Not everyone agrees with the premise that IQ scores measure intelligence, and most people realize that there are lots of talents that cannot be measured by objectively scored tests.

Remember that there are five million Americans who are eligible for membership in Mensa. How elitist is five million people?

What is the purpose of Mensa? What do you do to justify your existence?

Mensa's constitution specifies the society's three purposes:

- to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity
- to encourage research in the nature, characteristics and uses of intelligence
- to provide opportunities for social contacts among its members

As a membership society, we exist (in a legal sense) for the benefit of our members. Mensa does have scholarship programs at the national and local level, publishes a research journal, and gives awards for academic and publishing excellence. Most of this activity is under the auspices of the Mensa Education and Research Foundation, for which contributions are tax-deductible.

Most of what Mensa does is social in nature. Every Local Group holds at least one meeting per month. Some meetings feature guest speakers, some are group dinners, some are theater parties, some are to play board games. If a member wants to organize an activity, the structure is there to do so.

Constitutionally, Mensa is prohibited from taking any stands of a political, social, economic, or other nature. Individual members, of course, have lots of opinions — ask 100 Mensans their opinion on a given topic, and you'll get 110 answers; but they do not speak for the society as a whole when they do so.

Why does Mensa continue to use the IQ test as the basis for admission?

First, intelligence tests have not been dismissed as a means of measuring certain types of intelligence. Some psychologists claim these tests put some people at a disadvantage; however, intelligence tests are still, by and large, a valid measurement tool used by the psychological community.

Using anything but an objectively scored intelligence test would place potential members under far more subjective standards. For now at least, standardized intelligence tests are the most objective and reliable means available in measuring the intangibles of "intelligence."

Who are your famous members? Are there any really well-known stars, authors, politicians, Nobel Prize winners, etc.?

There are Mensans whose names you would recognize.

(Offer the names of those members who are listed in the external press kit. If they would like verification if someone famous is a member, they would need to contact the National Office.)

Who are the smartest people in Mensa? Who is the youngest or oldest member?

Our members' scores are held in the strictest confidence. They are revealed to only the member or potential member and the Mensa staff member who scored the test or evaluated the prior evidence.

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Marilyn Vos Savant, a member of Mensa and columnist for *Parade*, has the highest recorded IQ score.

To mention the names of the youngest and oldest members would be a violation of their privacy. However, I can tell you that we have members ranging in age from 3 to well into their 100s.

What about other High-IQ Societies, the ones that claim to limit themselves to people infinitely smarter than Mensans—how do you feel about them?

As far as I know, there are only a handful of other "High-IQ Societies" in the U.S. Some of these groups only hold one meeting a year or exist mainly through correspondence between members — but if they meet their members' needs, than I'm glad they're there.

I should add, though, that Mensa is the only "High-IQ Society" with an enormous national network of 50,000 members, which allows us to support the various programs and outlets for member involvement.

What about "Densa"? How do you feel about that?

According to the Gale Encyclopedia of Associations, Densa exists for the 98% of the population who wouldn't qualify to join Mensa and is listed in its "humor" category. Personally, I don't think makes good sense to call someone "dense" if he or she scored in the top 3 percent of the general population on a standardized intelligence test.

How many members of minority groups does Mensa have?

I don't know the exact percentages, but I would guess we don't have as much representation of minority groups as we would like.

Internationally, there are more than 130,000 Mensans who represent more than 100 different countries.

Do you think minorities are not members because IQ tests discriminate against them?

Some people would argue this point, while many more believe intelligence tests remain the most objective indicator of certain kinds of intelligence.

We welcome people of all groups to join Mensa, and we try to communicate this through all our recruiting efforts.

If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?

If I had a dollar for every time I heard that, I *would* be rich.

Who says that wealth is a byproduct of high intelligence? Look at people who are wealthy — they may be highly intelligent, they may be ambitious, they have highly marketable skills, they may be self-promoters, they may be a combination of these or they might be plain lucky.

Because we are such a diverse group, I'm sure there are millionaire Mensans. We also have members who do not make much money, but they are in a profession that makes them happy.

I've met some of your members. They seem to be underachievers, lonely hearts, arrogant, anti-social. What do you think about that?

There is no guarantee that a person with high intelligence is attractive, gregarious or highly motivated...nor does it mean that a person is not any of those.

Yes, some members are unusual in the way you mentioned, but so are non-Mensans. Come to a number of the meetings, as I have over the years, and you'll find that Mensa is an enormously diverse group. You'll meet people you like and people you don't like, that's what makes Mensa the exciting society it is.