

# Toddler named youngest Mensa member

[theday.co.uk/toddler-named-youngest-mensa-member-4](https://theday.co.uk/toddler-named-youngest-mensa-member-4) 28 May 2025



**Brain boxes:** Many celebrities, real and animated, claim to be members of Mensa, but research has shown that while IQ may predict academic success, it does not necessarily correlate with other life outcomes.

**Is genius overrated?** The world's cleverest society has welcomed its youngest-ever member. But some experts believe it might be all downhill from here for the erudite tyke.

## What's happening?

Most of us have a particular image of a genius: a loner whose cleverness makes them rude and patronising.

This idea of the isolated genius is encouraged by **Mensa**, a group that only accepts people with an **IQ** above 132, and which has just welcomed its newest and youngest member.

Joseph Harris-Birtill is just two-and-a-half years old. He spoke his first word at seven months, five months earlier than average and could read aloud at one-and-a-half.

## Find out more

But some think Joseph's gift might really be a curse. Being a genius can cause big problems.

Research shows people with high intelligence tend to have greater feelings of anxiety than others, and geniuses can often be bossy to people they work

with, stopping them from sharing their ideas.

Some say that only a small minority of geniuses are anxiety-ridden or arrogant.

Others wonder if genius really exists. Most experts believe what really counts in producing great art or thinking through logical problems is not raw intelligence but experience and persistence.

## Is genius overrated?

### Some say

Yes! Geniuses are often crushed by the sense that they could have been more than they are.

### Others think

No! Most people who are highly intelligent manage to lead fulfilling, successful lives.

## Six steps to discovery

### Some people say

#### 1. Connect

*"Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself, but talent instantly recognises genius."*

**Arthur Conan Doyle (1859 – 1930), British author**

*What do you think?*

**How do you feel about this story?** - Do you know any geniuses? Is their life easier or harder as a result?

**2. Wonder**

**What questions do you have?** - For example: Is intelligence more important than hard work? What is the difference between genius and talent?

**3. Investigate**

**What are the facts?** - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure about this story.

**4. Construct**

**What is your point of view?** - You invent a new pill that turns everyone who takes it into a genius. Do you make it available to everyone?

**5. Express**

**What do others believe?** - Get in a small group and take it in turns to write down one thing that you think a genius must have.

**6. Reflect**

**What might happen next?** - The year is 2045. Not a single genius has been born in the past 20 years. Write a description of how this has changed society.

**Glossary**

**Mensa** - The largest and oldest society for people with high-IQs in the world. Mensa is the Latin word for "table".

**IQ** - A means of measuring human intelligence. A person's IQ is usually ascertained by making them sit a standardised test. Some have criticised these tests as a means of evaluating intelligence, claiming that they ignore much of what it means to be intelligent.