

A decorative border of black silhouettes of various flowers and leaves, including what looks like a daisy and a lily, framing the top and sides of the page. A central archway is formed by the silhouettes, through which the title and text are placed.

How This Book Exercises Right-Brain Skills

You will give the right hemisphere of your brain a workout by trying to identify the proper function of these 80 household implements from their photographs. They were all in common use in the “good old days” before packaging design hid the inner workings with sheet metal and it became impossible to figure out what something was just by looking at it. Start with the first photo. *Don't turn the page* until you think you've figured out what the first object is, what it does and how it works. *Then* turn the page and you'll find the answer on the back of the photo. On the opposite page is a photo of another object for you to think about. You'll find its name. You'll see its description when you turn the page. And so on through the book. Working your brain like this will keep it sharp.

Some of these old household utensils were designed for tasks that are no longer needed. Try to imagine these objects as being useful in the performance of some day-to-day task of yesteryear. Keep your left hemisphere out of it. That side of the brain will try to find some link, *any* link, between something completely new to your experience and something else that you have experienced before. Your right brain is better at seeing things as they really are which is why aspiring artists are coached to “draw on the right side of the brain.” Identifying the objects in this book will challenge you to suspend your assumptions about the work they might do in your own familiar world. Concentrate on how they can work at all.

Objects you have never seen before challenge your right brain more than familiar ones. The left brain specializes in comparing new experiences with past ones and trying to apply rules such as grammar and conventional symbols — the meaning of a red traffic

light, for example, or the icon of a woman on a restroom door. The right brain excels at processing images you've never seen before — the face of someone you don't know, or, for a child, his or her first encounter with a swinging door. Only once they become familiar does your left brain take over the task of interpreting how an image fits into a prior pattern of experience. The ingenious contraptions in this book will require intense right-brain activity. And here's a hint: If you want to force your right hemisphere to dominate the left, try squeezing a tennis ball in your left hand as you focus on these tasks.

To deduce what practical function an object is designed to perform you must visualize the components of its design. If you have nothing but a picture to work from, you have to *imagine* what the gadget looks like in action and thus deduce its operation. What materials is it made of? Why those? How do its separate components fit together and interact? And, most important, what practical tasks would those design elements accomplish? You can uncover those answers only by inspecting it from all sides in your mind's eye. "If I move *this*, *that* will react" is a refinement of the same sort of skills that helps rats find their way through a maze. Engineers, physicists and architects excel at these abilities, though they too must use their left-brain skills to translate their creative insights into mathematical proofs, equations, and formulas so others can see what they see. A superb ability to visualize the changing relationships of physical matter in motion is the secret of creatively insightful physicists; Albert Einstein and Richard Feynman are two prime examples.

And follow the eyes of your smart aunt at this "yard-sale". Nobody says you have to figure all these out by yourself. If there is someone around with an eye for the genuine and a taste for the whimsical, invite her to the game. No matter how you use this book, we hope you, your brain and your brain's friends have a good time with it.

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