

The Microsoft marvel

Boy of five is youngest to pass IT exam that baffles graduates

Paul Harris reports

THIS little boy has a message for the millions of ordinary mortals who are terrified of using computer technology.

It's so easy, even a child can do it. Because Ayan Qureshi has become the world's youngest computer specialist, earning a qualification usually sought by university students hoping to work in IT. He was five years and 11 months old when he passed the Microsoft Certified Professional exam, which poses questions that most adults would find no less baffling than the answers.

The exam requires a professional level of understanding of Microsoft systems and is seen as a helping hand into a good job for recent computing graduates.

At home Ayan, now six, has a computer laboratory bristling with technology, some of which he set up himself. And at primary school, naturally, he's a wizard at information technology and maths.

Quite what he intends to do with knowledge that defeats many grown-ups at the first click of a mouse is as yet unclear. But if he doesn't actually use it to take over the world in the next couple of years, a top flight career in IT seems inevitable.

'He's very smart and he really loves technology,' father Asim, 43, said with some understatement.

'His focus amazes me'

Mr Qureshi, himself an IT consultant, added: 'I think he must have caught the bug by watching me work at home. He used to sit next to me and watch what I did like a hawk. Then he started playing with the computer - and using my spare hardware. Whatever I told him, he remembered the next day.'

'It's his focus that amazes me. Unlike other kids his age he's not interested in playing with toys. From a very early age it's been all about computers. By the time he was about four-and-a-half he'd be installing and configuring software.'

'There were things he wouldn't understand at first, but after working at it, he'd figure it out.'

'Once we spotted this ability and interest we decided to help him work towards developing it.'

Ayan was competent on a laptop before he was three and could play computer games with ease.

But he was more interested in how a computer worked than the entertainment it could provide. Mr Qureshi and his wife Mamoonah,



a doctor training to become a GP, helped him to learn more.

Ayan spent two hours a day for five months preparing for the Microsoft exam, helped by his father and long-distance tuition from London-based firm IT Bolts.

Last month he created his own computer network, connecting two PCs, two laptops and a router and programming them to exchange data. He installed and configured two versions of Windows and is looking forward to the release of



Boy genius: Ayan Qureshi, seen in the PC laboratory he built, has always been fascinated by computers

SO...COULD YOU EVER GET THESE RIGHT?

Q1 What are the processor speed and RAM requirements for installation of Windows 8.1?

Q2 In which of the following scenarios would you NOT use the USMT tool?

a) Side by side migrations

b) Wipe and load migrations
c) Upgrades
d) All of these

Q3 Metro style apps are designed to be sleek, quick, and modern with groups of common tasks consolidated to speed up usage.

If a user creates a new

folder in C:\Personal Docs and files are copied into that folder, will the Metro style apps have access to those files?

Q4 You are using sysprep to prepare a system for imaging. You want to enable end users to customise their

Windows operating system, create user accounts, name the computer, and other tasks.

Which sysprep setting should you use? a) /audit; b) /unattend; c) /generalize; d) /oobe

ANSWERS

Q1: 1GHz or faster, 1GB Ram

Q2: c
Q3: No
Q4: d

the next version ('It looks like Windows 8, but better,' he said).

Ayan, who was born in Pakistan but moved to England with his family five years ago, sat the exam at Birmingham City University, near his home in Walsgrave, Coventry.

Invigilators who saw the byte-size youngster take his seat contacted Microsoft HQ to verify his eligibility. But he finished well inside the two-hour limit, and passed. It set a world record - the previous youngest holder of the title was aged six-

and-a-half. The qualification in theory allows him to work in an IT department solving computer glitches, although he is not legally allowed to work until he is 13.

But Ayan's thirst for knowledge extends far beyond computers. He is interested in telescopes, compasses and prisms.

'The rainbow-coloured light reflected through the prism is amazing,' he said.

Yesterday Stefano Capaldo of Firebrand Training, which runs IT

courses, said: 'This exam is not easy. The concept of a five-year-old understanding the language and context of some of the questions is amazing. About 30 or 40 per cent of the vocabulary is just a bunch of jumbled-up letters. It boggles my mind to imagine a five-year-old having a grasp of it.'

Mr Qureshi said: 'We're very proud of Ayan. He has plans to take an advanced test in future but for now, he has to concentrate on school.'

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Eurostar's reclining seat revolution

By Ray Massey and Jenny Coad

ARGUMENTS with the passenger behind can mean making full use of reclining seats ends up being anything but relaxing.

But for Eurostar travellers that could soon change. Its new fleet of trains has been fitted with a seat in which the base slides forward instead of the backrest reclining.

Found in new e320 model, the 672 seats in standard class will extend by up to 2in, and the 218 seats in premier class by 4in. They were made by Italian design house Pininfarina, famous for their work with sports cars such as Ferraris. The e320 trains - so-called

because they travel at 320kph (200mph) - are due go into service at the end of 2015.

News of the launch was announced to mark the 20th anniversary of Eurostar. Chief executive Nicolas Petrovic said: 'With just one year to go until our new e320 train comes into service, our passengers will soon see a complete transformation of our service.'

May 2015 will see the start of a new year-round Eurostar service to Provence, stopping at Lyon, Avignon and Marseille.

Why it helps to cry tears of joy

By Ben Spencer Science Reporter

IT is one of biology's great quirks - why do people cry with joy?

But now psychologists think they have worked out why humans shed tears in moments of extreme happiness. According to scientists, it may be the body's way of keeping emotions in check.

Experts believe that tempering an overwhelmingly positive emotion with a negative physical reaction helps people to control the energy-sapping high.

Yale University psychologist Oriana Aragon, who led the research, said: 'People may be restoring emotional equilibrium with

these expressions. They seem to take place when people are overwhelmed... and people who do this seem to recover better.'

The team, whose findings are published in the journal Psychological Science, cited other similar reactions including people laughing when they are nervous.

Their study, which tested 680 people, found that those who displayed these 'dimorphous' emotions tended to show a bigger drop-off in intense emotion after five minutes.