

# Characteristics of Gifted Children

Gifted or potentially gifted students usually differ from classmates on three key dimensions: June Maker (1982)

1. the pace at which they learn
2. the depth of their understanding
3. the interests that they hold

The following is a list of characteristics typical of gifted children including positive and negative behaviors which may be exhibited. A child could exhibit both positive and negative behaviors of a characteristic depending on the environment. Also, many children exhibit these characteristics at various times. A child identified as gifted will exhibit many of the characteristics on a regular basis. The child needs to learn to modify negative behaviors. They do not need to continue to be a problem for the child.

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Positive Behavior</i>	<i>Negative Behavior</i>
learns rapidly/easily	memorizes and masters basic facts quickly	gets bored easily, resists drill, disturbs others
reads intensively	reads many books and uses library on own	neglects other responsibilities
advanced vocabulary	communicates ideas well	shows off, evokes peer resentment
retains a quantity of information	ready recall and responses	monopolizes discussion
long attention span	sticks with a task or project	resists class routine, dislikes interruptions
curious, has a variety of interests	asks questions, gets excited about ideas	goes on tangents, no follow-through
works independently	creates and invents beyond assigned tasks	refuses to work with others
alert and observant	recognizes problems	impolitely corrects adults
has a good sense of humor	able to laugh at self	plays cruel jokes or tricks on others
comprehends, recognizes relationships	able to solve social problems alone	interferes in the affairs of others
high academic achievement	does schoolwork well	brags, egotistical, impatient with others
fluent, verbal facility	forceful with words, numbers; leads peers in positive ways	leads others into negative behaviors
individualistic	asserts self and ideas, has few friends, sense of own uniqueness	stubborn in beliefs
self motivated, self sufficient	requires minimum teacher direction or help	is overly aggressive, challenges authority

Excerpt from *What to Expect When You're Raising a Gifted Child: A Handbook for Parents of Gifted Children*, published by the Ohio Association for Gifted Children.

## More Characteristics of Gifted Students

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Gifted students can often be recognized by certain characteristics and behaviors. Gifted students can be found in all ethnic and racial groups. A child who is unusually able in one or more of these three areas often...

1. Has an unusually good vocabulary.
2. Has quick mastery and recall of factual information.
3. Has lots of information on a variety of topics.
4. Is alert and observant (usually sees more or gets more out of a story, film, etc., than others).
5. Reads a great deal on his/her own.
6. Reasons things out, recognizes relationships, comprehends meanings and makes logical associations.
7. Works persistently on things that interest him/her.
8. Is easily bored with routine tasks.
9. Prefers to work independently; requires little direction from teachers.
10. Strives for perfection; is self-critical.
11. Often is self-assertive, may be stubborn in his/her beliefs.
12. Is curious about many things, asks questions about anything and everything.
13. Reveals originality in written, oral, artistic expression.
14. Offers unusual, unique or clever answers.
15. Is uninhibited in giving opinions.
16. Is often concerned with different ways of doing "things" (will modify, improve or adapt).
17. Displays a keen sense of humor.
18. Is nonconforming; accepts disorder, does not fear being different.

## Recognizing the Characteristics of Gifted Children

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children (1985) cites three types of characteristics of gifted children: general behavioral, learning, and creative characteristics.

### General Behavior Characteristics

Gifted children's behavior differs from that of other children their age in the following ways:

- Many gifted children learn to read early, with better comprehension of the nuances of language. As much as half the gifted and talented population has learned to read before entering school.
- Gifted children often read widely, quickly, and intensely and have large vocabularies.
- Gifted children commonly learn basic skills better, more quickly, and with less practice.
- They are better able to construct and handle abstractions.
- They often pick up and interpret nonverbal cues and can draw inferences that other children need to have spelled out for them.
- They take less for granted, seeking the "hows" and "whys."
- They can work independently at an earlier age and can concentrate for longer periods.

- Their interests are both wildly eclectic and intensely focused.
- They often have seemingly boundless energy, which sometimes leads to a misdiagnosis of hyperactivity.
- They usually respond and relate well to parents, teachers, and other adults. They may prefer the company of older children and adults to that of their peers.
- They like to learn new things, are willing to examine the unusual, and are highly inquisitive.
- They tackle tasks and problems in a well-organized, goal-directed, and efficient manner.
- They exhibit an intrinsic motivation to learn, find out, or explore and are often very persistent. "I'd rather do it myself" is a common attitude.

### **Learning Characteristics**

**Gifted children are natural learners who often show many of these characteristics:**

- They may show keen powers of observation and a sense of the significant; they have an eye for important details.
- They may read a great deal on their own, preferring books and magazines written for children older than they are.
- They often take great pleasure in intellectual activity.
- They have well-developed powers of abstraction, conceptualization, and synthesis.
- They readily see cause-effect relationships.
- They often display a questioning attitude and seek information for its own sake as much as for its usefulness.
- They are often skeptical, critical, and evaluative. They are quick to spot inconsistencies.
- They often have a large storehouse of information about a variety of topics, which they can recall quickly.
- They readily grasp underlying principles and can often make valid generalizations about events, people, or objects.
- They quickly perceive similarities, differences, and anomalies.
- They often attack complicated material by separating it into components and analyzing it systematically.

### **Creative Characteristics**

**Gifted children's creative abilities often set them apart from their age-mates. These characteristics may take the following forms:**

- Gifted children are fluent thinkers, able to generate possibilities, consequences, or related ideas.
- They are flexible thinkers, able to use many different alternatives and approaches to problem solving.
- They are original thinkers, seeking new, unusual, or unconventional associations and combinations among items of information.
- They can also see relationships among seemingly unrelated objects, ideas, or facts.

- They are elaborate thinkers, producing new steps, ideas, responses, or other embellishments to a basic idea, situation, or problems.
- They are willing to entertain complexity and seem to thrive on problem solving.
- They are good guessers and can readily construct hypotheses or "what if" questions.
- They often are aware of their own impulsiveness and irrationality, and they show emotional sensitivity.
- They are extremely curious about objects, ideas, situations, or events.
- They often display intellectual playfulness and like to fantasize and imagine.
- They can be less intellectually inhibited than their peers are in expressing opinions and ideas, and they often disagree spiritedly with others' statements.
- They are sensitive to beauty and are attracted to aesthetic values.

## Visual and Performing Arts

### Music

- has good sense of rhythm , is well-coordinated
- discriminates musical and other sounds well
- understands musical relationships
- enjoys musical activities and demonstrates musical feeling
- shows tonal memory
- responds readily to rhythm, melody and harmony
- uses music to express feeling or experience
- makes up original tunes
- enjoys dance and dramatic activities with musical elements

### Dramatics

- demonstrates interest and enjoyment in dramatic activities
- readily shifts into role of another character, animal or object
- uses voice to reflect changes in mood
- demonstrates understanding of conflict when acting out a dramatic event
- communicates feelings by means of facial expressions, gestures and bodily movements
- enjoys evoking emotional responses from listeners
- demonstrates ability to dramatize feelings and experiences
- brings a dramatic situation to a climax with a well-timed ending when telling a story

### Art

- draws a variety of objects
- puts depth into drawing, showing planning and good proportion
- treats art seriously and enjoys it
- shows originality in modes of undertaking art
- is willing to try out new materials and experiences
- pursues art in spare time
- uses art to express feelings and experiences
- is interested in other people's art, both appreciating it and criticizing it
- likes to model three dimensionally with clay, soap carving, plasticine, etc.