

# What Are Some Characteristics of Gifted Children?

Although there is no easy formula for identifying a gifted child, certain characteristics appear to differentiate the gifted child from his/her classmates, such as:

- Early ability to read and to understand nuances in the language: A child who is gifted often reads two or more grade levels above current grade placement and reads widely in many areas or intensely in one subject area.
- Early use of advanced vocabulary: The ability to express thoughts readily and clearly is often a characteristic of a gifted child.
- Retention of a variety of information: A gifted child often amazes parents and teachers by learning new information quickly and remembering the details over long periods of time.
- Periods of intense concentration: The child can become totally engrossed in topics of interest while being oblivious to surrounding events.
- A broad and changing spectrum of interests: The child may be involved in many self-initiated projects at the same time.
- Keen observation and curiosity: An acute awareness of self and the environment is typical of a gifted child. The child may persistently pursue a line of questioning to learn more about topics of interest.
- Complex processing of information: A gifted child is able to perceive relationships, comprehend implications, and process a large amount of information.
- Ability to think abstractly: The child can often move from concrete to symbolic representation very comfortably and at an earlier age than most children.
- Strong critical thinking skills: The child is able to perform evaluations based on established criteria and often notices discrepancies between what people say and what they do.
- Ability to follow directions and assume responsibility: A child who is gifted often shows independence, self-reliance, and responsibility in completing tasks.
- Creativity and inventiveness: The child is able to view situations from varying perspectives, develop and explore alternative approaches, and generate novel products.
- Seemingly limitless energy: Frequently a gifted child is alert and eager, delving into interests beyond the usual limitations of children his/her own age.
- Leadership: The child often assumes leadership roles in a variety of circumstances and settings.

**Note:** High grades in classes and/or high scores on standardized achievement tests are not necessarily indicators that a student is gifted. Further evaluation is necessary for accurate identification.

# Early Signs of Giftedness Include:

- Unusual alertness in infancy.
- Less need for sleep in infancy.
- Long attention span.
- High activity level.
- Smiling or recognizing caretakers early.
- Intense reactions to noise, pain, frustration.
- Advanced progression through the developmental milestones.
- Extraordinary memory.
- Enjoyment and speed of learning.
- Early and extensive language development.
- Fascination with books.
- Curiosity.
- Excellent sense of humor.
- Abstract reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Vivid imagination (e.g., imaginary companions).
- Sensitivity and compassion.

If a child exhibits a majority of these characteristics, parents may wish to have the child assessed by an experienced examiner to find out if the child is gifted. Firstborn children tend to be recognized more often than their siblings. When one child in the family is gifted, it is quite possible that others may also be gifted.

Early identification is recommended (ages 3 through 8) because it permits early intervention, as important for gifted as for any other children with special needs.

# Differences in Characteristics

<b>Bright Child</b>	<b>Gifted Learner</b>
Knows the answers.	Asks the questions.
Is interested.	Is highly curious.
Is attentive.	Is mentally and physically involved.
Has good ideas.	Has wild, silly ideas.
Works hard.	Plays around, yet tests well.
Answers the questions.	Discusses in detail, elaborates.
Top of the group.	Beyond the group.
Listens with interest.	Shows strong feelings and opinions.
Learns with ease.	Already knows.
6-8 repetitions for mastery.	1-2 repetitions for mastery.
Understands ideas.	Constructs abstractions.
Enjoys peers.	Prefers adults.
Grasps the meaning.	Draws inferences.
Completes assignments.	Initiates projects.
Is receptive.	Is intense.
Copies accurately.	Creates a new design.
Enjoys school.	Enjoys learning.
Absorbs information.	Manipulates information.
Technician.	Inventor.
Good memorizer.	Good guesser.
Enjoys straightforward sequential information.	Thrives on complexity.
Is alert.	Is keenly observant.
Is pleased with own learning.	Is highly self-critical.