

# Could My Child Be Gifted?

## What Is Giftedness?

Researcher and author of the book, The Gifted Adult, Mary-Elaine Jacobsen says, “The promise of high potential and creative intelligence is accompanied by a specific set of personality traits and inner processes-not simply more of some attribute, but an altogether different quality of thinking and experiencing.”

Gifted education researchers have designed an IQ chart, with attendant monikers, for describing the cognitive abilities of gifted children. Abilities vary between these levels, with the general characteristics of giftedness increasing in intensity as the IQ rises.

### IQ Score Chart

130+	gifted
130-145	moderately gifted
145-160	highly gifted
160-180	exceptionally gifted
180+	profoundly gifted
200+	sometimes jokingly referred to as terminally gifted

## Characteristics of Giftedness

Giftedness characteristics become more pronounced with each successive level of giftedness, the characteristics are epitomized by an eagerness, an intensity, a drive, and a concentration bordering on passion.

The following Characteristics of Giftedness Scale is provided courtesy of the Gifted Development Center, in Denver, Colorado:

Several studies were conducted between 1981 and 1986 to determine the validity of this set of characteristics, and the list has been refined to incorporate the research findings. The following 25 characteristics have resulted:

### Characteristics of Giftedness Scale

1. Good problem solving/reasoning abilities
2. Rapid learning ability
3. Extensive vocabulary
4. Excellent memory
5. Long attention span
6. Personal sensitivity
7. Compassion for others
8. Perfectionism

9. Intensity
10. Moral sensitivity
11. Unusual curiosity
12. Perseverant when interested
13. High degree of energy
14. Preference for older companions
15. Wide range of interests
16. Great sense of humor
17. Early or avid reading ability
18. Concerned with justice, fairness
19. At times, judgment seems mature for age
20. Keen powers of observation
21. Vivid imagination
22. High degree of creativity
23. Tends to question authority
24. Shows ability with numbers
25. Good at jigsaw puzzles

If a child demonstrates more than three-fourths of these traits, it is likely that he or she is gifted.”

## **How The Gifted Learn**

Because many gifted children, especially high IQ children, hate to write, spell badly, and love to play with math, there are specific accommodations and strategies parents may use to facilitate their child’s academic success from an early age. Very abstract children may need special accommodations in other subjects, as well. The following list addresses some tips and strategies:

- Allow your child to dictate stories to you
- Do not force him to write, it may be either painful or frustrating for him
- Sloppy handwriting is not a sign of laziness
- Some young gifted children enjoy practicing lovely handwriting as an art form, but develop bad handwriting once writing is used as a means of communication
- Speak well! Many gifted children learn proper grammar through conversation
- Horrible spelling is often the calling card of the highly gifted
- Remediation exercises for bad spelling and poor handwriting may make your child feel stupid
- Alpha Smart word processors are being used widely in school systems as an accommodation for handwriting difficulties
- Buy a typing tutorial computer program for your gifted child
- Typing is an acceptable substitute for handwriting
- Very abstract children may need help gathering their thoughts aloud to parents or to a tape recorder before beginning an outline for a paper

- Writing outlines may be VERY difficult for some abstract gifted children to accomplish (even verbally fluent children)
- Allow your child to dictate math solutions to you
- Allow your child to skip “showing his work” in math problems as long as he gets the answer right
- Do not force your child to use the “school” method of functions and equations if he can utilize his own method for the same problem
- Allow your child to do math work that is not in sequential order
- Trust that the child who is flirting with algebra, trigonometry, or calculus “before he is ready,” is ready
- Drill and kill is an inappropriate pedagogy for gifted children
- Allow your child to read above grade level
- Do not force your child to write summaries about every story or book he reads; he processes so many thoughts about that story that retrieving those thoughts after the fact may be maddening for him
- Encourage your child to chat about what he reads, thereby providing you with an informal summary of his reading without frustrating him unduly
- Provide him with reading material that is commensurate with his interests
- Allow him to choose books from the adult section of the library, even if he only looks at the pictures
- Encourage him to read adult-level magazines about his favorite subject (don’t provide only children’s magazines on the subject)
- Read to him, even after he can read for himself
- Textbook reading material may be boring and superficial, read library books on key subjects instead
- Don’t be afraid to let him read a book that is “too hard for him” if he picks it
- If he drops a book after only a cursory pass at reading it, don’t panic, he is flexing his mental muscles and gearing up for the next pass
- He may not re-approach that book for a year or more, let him take his time

Lateral thinking, global thinking, abstract thinking, visual-spatial thinking, and other terms have been used to describe the way that gifted people think. From the top down, or the opposite of sequentially, the gifted child’s learning process requires an overview before the details, the big picture before the first puzzle piece. These kids are bored silly by repetition, A-Z fact accumulation, sequential skill mastery, and other popular public school pedagogy. They become frustrated with textbooks that break information down into bite size pieces because they are starving for the whole story.