

Is Your Child Gifted?

Is your very bright child “gifted” as schools define the term and what does this mean for you **and** your child? It is estimated that anywhere from 2-20% of the school population is gifted based on measures of IQ, academic success, creativity, leadership ability, visual, dramatic or physical gifts. In order to be eligible for a special program a child must fit the particular school system definition of giftedness.

Testing is available based on academic achievement, intellectual evaluations, measures of creativity, and teacher ratings. However, sometimes physical or social problems may overshadow talents. A child may not qualify for a gifted program due to a number of factors. For instance, a child who is very young or exhibits behavior problems (boredom or frustration) may not qualify for gifted placement. Standard tests often do not credit the creative answer and may penalize a thoughtful, reflective child.

How can you tell if your child is gifted? Given the broader view of giftedness that includes creativity and special talents, you can look at the following factors in your child no matter what the age. Curiosity, persistence, coupled with an insatiable need to ask logical and searching questions are indications of giftedness. A good memory including retention of an extraordinary quantity and variety of facts may point to a gifted child. A wide variety of interests, high-order thinking skills (including strong critical thinking and selfcriticism) coupled with a high level of language development are gifted traits.

Precociousness, social maturity and a sense of humor also are traits of a gifted child. Keep in mind that not all children who are gifted exhibit all of the above traits.

Understanding your child's traits will help you in understanding your child. You can also keep in mind that expectations need to be kept at a reasonable level. While the intellect may be racing ahead, motor and social skills may be age appropriate. You can be supportive of your child when intellectual abilities make her feel differently from peers. You can point out that everyone is unique in some ways – intellectual ability just happens to be her unique gift. Most important to understand is that these children don't just need more school work. They need time to pursue their own passionate interests and time off to play, daydream, and just ride their bikes.

A professional can help in evaluating your child for giftedness. A school psychologist will assess for intellectual ability. However, a team of educators including your child's teacher, the gifted teacher, yourself and some data like homework and tests scores will all go into the process. It is a good idea to talk to your child's teacher early in your child's school career to talk about the gifted traits you are observing in your child. Your input can help the teacher begin to see characteristics in your child that may not have been apparent before. If your child is identified as gifted, you can talk to the teacher or a school psychologist about which is the best option for your child.

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