

Bright Learners and Gifted Learners

The Highly-Able/Bright Learner



Knows the answers
Is interested
Is attentive
Has good ideas
Works hard
Answers the questions
Top group
Listens with interest
Learns with ease
6-8 repetitions
Understands ideas
Enjoys peers
Grasps the meaning
Completes assignments
Is receptive
Copies accurately
Enjoys school
Absorbs information
Technician
Good memorizer
Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentation
Is alert
Is pleased with own learning

The Gifted Learner



Asks the questions
Is highly curious
Is mentally and physically involved
Has wild, silly ideas
Plays around, yet tests well
Discusses in detail, elaborates
Beyond the group
Shows strong feelings and opinions
Already knows
1-2 repetitions for mastery
Constructs abstractions
Prefers adults
Draws inferences
Initiates projects
Is intense
Creates a new design
Enjoys learning
Manipulates information
Inventor
Good guesser
Thrives on complexity
Is keenly observant
Is highly self-critical

by Janice Szabos

Some Characteristics of
Gifted Learners



- Advanced vocabulary for age.**
- Outstanding memory, large storehouse of information.**
- Curious, asks endless questions.**
- Has many interests, hobbies, and collections.**
- Many have a “passionate interest”.**
- Intense, gets totally absorbed.**
- Motivated if interested, resists other work.**
- Reluctant to change subjects.**
- Comfortable with abstract thinking.**
- Perceives subtle cause and effect relationships.**
- Prefers complex and challenging tasks.**
- Can “track” two or more things at once.**
- Grasps quickly, then resists doing the work.**
- Comes up with “better” way.**
- Sensitive to beauty, feelings, and emotions.**
- Advanced sense of justice and fairness.**
- Aware of global issues.**
- Sophisticated sense of humor.**
- Transfers concepts to new situations.**
- Sees unobvious relationships.**
- May prefer the company of adults.**
- May prefer to work alone.**
- Bossy in group situations.**
- Needs to constantly share all he knows.**

Characteristics of Visual Spatial Giftedness



- Comes up with highly creative ideas and/or products**
- Loves to construct with Legos™ or other objects**

Makes up rich stories but may be unable to write them down
 Is disorganized
 Appears lazy, often daydreaming
 May appear bright but have difficulty learning to read
 Early ability apparent when doing puzzles and mazes
 Highly developed sense of intuition
 Excellent mathematical reasoning but may be slow at math facts
 Understands complex relations and systems
 Unusual imagination
 Often musically talented
 Sophisticated sense of humor
 Strong visual memory
 Highly sensitive of their surroundings, may be more distractible
 Astute questioning ability
 Exceptional ability in geometry and science
 Often artistic but may have poor fine motor skills
 When spoken to, comprehends everything or nothing

Dr. Linda Silverman at the Gifted Development Center in Denver, Colorado has done extensive research into Visual Spatial Gifted Learners. Visit her site for more information at: www.gifteddevelopment.com

Twice Exceptional - Gifted and Learning Disabled

Chart: Characteristics of Twice-Exceptional Learners

Signs of Giftedness	Signs of Learning Disabilities
~excellent long-term memory	~poor short-term memory
~extensive vocabulary	~speaking vocabulary more sophisticated than written

~ excels in reading comprehension	~struggles with decoding words
~excels in mathematical reasoning	~does poorly at computation
~advanced verbal skills in discussions	~refuses to do written work
~facile with computers	~handwriting is illegible
~grasps abstract concepts	~has difficulty with spelling and phonics
~performs better with challenging work	~struggles with easy, sequential material
~thrives on complexity	~difficulty with rote memorization
~highly creative, imaginative	~often inattentive in class
~reasons well	~emotions can overpower reasoning
~is a keen observer	~poor auditory memory
~may have acute hearing	~poor listening skills
~has very interesting ideas, extremely curious	~weak in language mechanics
~has high degree of energy	~may be unable to learn unless interested
~perceptive	~performs poorly on timed tests
~insightful (seems "wise")	~hopelessly disorganized
~excellent sense of humor	~finds clever ways to avoid weak areas
~may excel at art, science, geometry	~may fail at foreign languages and subjects mechanics, technology, or music emphasizing audition, sequencing, memory

Chart: Comparison of High Achievers, Gifted Learners, and Creative Thinkers

A High Achiever...	A Gifted Learner...	A Creative Thinker...
Remembers the answers	Poses unforeseen questions	Sees exceptions
Is interested	Is curious	Wonders
Is attentive	Is selectively mentally engaged	Daydreams; may seem off task
Generates advanced ideas	Generates complex, abstract ideas	Overflows with ideas, many of which will never be developed
Works hard to achieve	Knows without working hard	Plays with ideas and concepts
Answer the questions in detail	Ponders with depth and multiple perspectives	Injects new possibilities
Performs at the top of the group	Is beyond the group	Is in own group
Responds with interest and opinions	Exhibits feelings and opinions from multiple perspectives	Shares bizarre, sometimes conflicting opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows	Questions: What if...
Needs 6 to 8 repetitions to master	Needs 1 to 3 repetitions to master	Questions the need for mastery
Enjoys the company of age peers	Prefers the company of intellectual peers	Prefers the company of creative peers but often works alone
Understands complex, abstract humor	Creates complex, abstract humor	Relishes wild, off-the-wall humor
Grasps the meaning	Infers and connects concepts	Makes mental leaps: Aha!
Completes assignments on time	Initiates projects and extensions of assignments	Initiates more projects that will ever be completed
Is receptive	Is intense	Is independent and unconventional
Is accurate and complete	Is original and continually developing	Is original and continually developing
Enjoys school often	Enjoys self-directed learning	Enjoys creating
Absorbs information	Manipulates information	Improvises
Is a technician with expertise in a field	Is an expert who abstracts beyond the field	Is an inventor and idea generator
Memorizes well	Guesses and infers well	Creates and brainstorms well
Is highly alert and observant	Anticipates and relates observations	Is intuitive
Is pleased with own learning	Is self-critical	Is never finished with possibilities
Gets A's	May not be motivated by grades	May not be motivated by grades
Is able	Is intellectual	Is idiosyncratic

Bright/Highly Able Child vs. Gifted Child

National Association for Gifted Children--<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/nagc/gifted.html>

If you ask the teacher who the gifted kids are, they are likely to point out the ones that are *bright*. Bright kids are a joy to teach. They listen well, don't question the teacher, work hard and answer questions. They don't challenge the teacher's competence or stray off the curriculum.

Bright kids enjoy school and get challenged with the work that they are asked to do. They find the work neither too hard nor too easy.

The gifted child on the other hand may be spending almost all of the school day thinking or doing something other than what the teacher wants. They find the constant repetition so boring that they often don't shine in the classroom. You might find the gifted child day dreaming, looking out of the window, reading a book instead of listening.

Gifted children often hate school and are not challenged at all by the work presented to them and the concepts and ideas being taught are far below their intellectual prowess. The problems that this creates are many and varied. Some may go underground and not perform, some may bully other kids, some might annoy the teacher with wild and silly sounding ideas and suggestions and further annoy the teacher by doing very little work but demonstrating mastery of a subject when it comes to test time. In general....

a bright/highly able child. . .	a gifted child....
knows the answer	asks the questions - sometimes deep probing questions of an abstract nature
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
is in the top group	is beyond the group
listens with interest	shows strong feelings and opinions
learns with ease	already knows
needs 6-8 repetitions for mastery	needs 1-2 repetitions for mastery
understands ideas	constructs abstractions
enjoys peers	prefers adults or older children or seeks out other very bright or gifted peers.
grasps the meaning	draws inferences and opens up new questions.
completes assignments	initiates projects
is receptive	Is intense
copies accurately	creates a new design
enjoys school	enjoys learning - but may hate school.
absorbs information.	manipulates information
a bright/highly able child. . .	a gifted child....
is a technician	is an inventor - Loves construction toys
is a good Memorizer	is a good guesser - draws on vast information store.

is alert	is keenly observant - seems to remember fine details.
is pleased with own learning	is highly self-critical - can be perfectionistic to the point of tantrums when young.
enjoys straight-forward and/or sequential presentation	thrives on complexity - needs the whole picture. Requires a gestalt approach.

So, is your child gifted or bright? If many of the statements in the above table ring true for your child - and as a parent you will know, then you may want to find out the child's behavior in school and see if it is what you expect.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED CHILDREN

Very often parents are the first to recognize that their child is bright for his or her age. There are many checklists of gifted characteristics. In general they contain several common elements - The child:

- asks lots of questions and learns more quickly than others
- has a very retentive memory
- is extremely curious and can concentrate for long periods on subjects of interest
- has a wide general knowledge and interest in the world
- enjoys problem-solving, often missing out the intermediate stages in an argument and making original connections
- has an unusual imagination
- shows strong feels and opinions and has an odd sense of humor
- sets high standards and is a perfectionist

DIFFERENT FORMS OF INTELLIGENCE

The child of high academic ability may be identified by intelligence tests. He may, however, be gifted in areas in which intelligence tests are poor predictors. He may, for example, be:

- an imaginative or creative thinker
- socially, or ethically gifted, with a well-developed sense of the moral implications of actions or situations
- good at drawing, building or designing though poor at writing
- a well-developed "high achiever" who performs well in academic work but who scores poorly on intelligence tests because their relevance is not immediately apparent to him.

A child may fulfill many of the criteria of the checklist of characteristics of giftedness yet not perform well at school. His written work may be poor; he may be lazy and lethargic or daydream and appear inattentive; he may spend a great deal of time decorating his notebook; he may clown around and disrupt lessons; he may be uncooperative, difficult to motivate and critical of his

teachers and of other children in his class. Sometimes such a child has frequent absences from his school.

Exceptionally bright children may also be well ahead in maths, particularly in problem solving. They may show a wide range of interests and an extended general knowledge. They often pursue hobbies with great enthusiasm, which sometimes verges on obsession. Many have great powers of concentration and an astonishing strength of will and purpose!

Gifted children usually show keen powers of observation and reasoning, of seeing relationships and of generalizing from a few given facts. They often memorize quickly and show an unusual imagination which comes out in the way they respond to questions.

Children of high intelligence often want to spend time with older children as well as with adults. They often prefer games and hobbies which are usually associated with older children.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW IF YOUR CHILD IS GIFTED?

All children, whether gifted, bright, average or below average, deserve the chance to lead a happy and satisfying life. Gifted children have a great thirst for knowledge and it is vital that this need is recognized as early as possible so that parents and teachers can give them plenty of opportunities to develop their talents. A good school will try to identify very able pupils and to meet their expectations and needs.

It is very easy to destroy the self-confidence of any child and this is particularly so when they are talented, gifted and able. Their experiences with their teachers, their peers and their parents are critical, and it is always important to look for the indicators which suggest that a difficult, unhappy or bored child has hidden talent.

Indicators of Giftedness

1. Good powers of reasoning, dealing with abstractions, noticing relationships.
2. Selecting and retaining relevant information.
3. Good memory - for words, places, etc.
4. Interested in words early: may have learnt to read early.
5. Wide spoken vocabulary, and good sentence structures, using accurate grammar.
6. Very sharp observation.
7. Creative, with good imagination and interest in stories.
8. Shows great intellectual curiosity: asks questions that are philosophical or religious at times.
9. Scores 130+ on group or individual ability tests, and scores similarly on attainment tests.
10. "Buttonholes" grown-ups to get information.
11. Scores highly on non-verbal tests.

Not all these indicators will occur in the same child.

The following items are not themselves indicators of giftedness but are other characteristics of children of high ability with low attainments, children with talent who are experiencing frustration or are typical reactions which intelligent children display to stress.

★	<i>* Degree of immaturity in some aspects, mingling with maturity in others.</i>	Temper tantrums. Sulks.
★	<i>* In response to basic subjects may be inattentive;</i>	Often bored, and makes errors, causing teachers to deny s/he has talent.
★	<i>* Some difficulty in learning basic skills,</i>	writing and spelling. (Tendency towards dyslexia).
★	<i>* High activity, but undirected.</i>	Difficulty in making good relationships with age peers.
★	<i>Orally very bright; an insistent talker, but cannot write much.</i>	Tendency to ask questions that may appear provocative.

Perhaps we may look for some of the following Categories of high ability children.

- **HIGH POTENTIAL** Underachievers with high measured IQ.
- **SPECIFIC ACHIEVEMENT** Children with an isolated intellectual interest.
- **SPATIAL/MECHANICAL ABILITY** Children with outstanding awareness and mechanical understanding (may not write well)
- **TALENT** Children with high levels of accomplishment in Art, Music, Drama, Sport, etc.
- **EXCEPTIONAL ABILITY** Academic attainments match high ability, and these children are generally recognized as gifted.

ARE GIFTED CHILDREN GOOD AT EVERYTHING?

Exceptionally bright children often show good hand-eye coordination, though sometimes their handwriting lags behind their reading and other skills. A six year old with a mental age of ten may still write and draw like a six-year old. Some children may refuse to produce any work on paper because of the frustration caused when they are unable to live up to their own impossibly high standards in handwriting and drawing. Others are particularly skilful in playing with ideas, in using their imagination and in being creative. Such characteristics do not always show up on traditional intelligence tests, but parents who suspect their child may be gifted should not be afraid to talk things over with the teachers at his school.

There is a group of children who are better at seeing and doing than at talking and listening. These are sometimes referred to as visual-spatial children. They may find difficulty in expressing themselves in words, but often show outstanding mechanical and artistic ingenuity. In school classes where adequate provision is not made for them, able pupils tend to become bored because not enough is being demanded of them. Among the consequences of this may be:

- switching off - e.g. day-dreaming
- avoiding school (by among other things imaginary ailments)

- disruptiveness, which may take the form of clowning or truculence.

Gifted Learners with Poor Coordination

Definition: high-ability children with problem-solving capability but poor hand-eye coordination

1. There are frequently problems with the kind of child who is very quick at logical applications and problem solving techniques, but whose skill at handwriting is affected to the point where writing appears difficult.
2. The reasons for this kind of personality appear to be related to brain structure. Thus this kind of character is inborn in a child and not the result; of environmental influence.
3. Such children may be very quick to learn spatial awareness; they may have excellent memory for locations, shapes concepts, and technological explanations or principles. They are likely to show- all these characteristics at a pre-school age.
4. They may be quick to pick up oral vocabulary
5. BUT when they first go to school, they may disappoint teachers and themselves by being unable to write neatly. Their writing is frequently messy, uncoordinated, and sometimes shows signs of dyslexic reversal or omission. Some such children show signs of ambidexterity or left-handedness.
6. IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE CHILD FEELS WHEN TRYING

TO WRITE

He or she has a clear concept of what neat and appropriate writing looks like but cannot physically control the pencil or crayon so as to produce work of that standard.

At first, careful efforts will generally be made to overcome the child's deficiency. He or she will probably try hard to improve. Any comparison with a child nearby whose different brain structure allows easy and neat writing will be detrimental. Such children do not need to be criticized for their poor writing; they are usually very well aware of it.

The child feels very disappointed and ashamed of her/his writing but cannot find the way to solve the difficulty (his/her hands have not yet developed this skill)

7. It often follows that the child will refuse to write, or write very little. She/he will possibly begin to hate writing and try to avoid it.

8. IT IS NECESSARY TO FACE FACTS.

- The child is not being naughty or awkward on purpose.
- S/he genuinely cannot write with ease and neatness.
- Time will help - Criticism will hinder.
- Parents and teachers need to be accepting and encouraging.

9. Are there any alternatives? For example, could a computer keyboard be of any value? Would the school allow this for some of the work?

10. "Fine motor skills" will develop in time, but it is important not to cause emotional distaste.

A GIFTED CHILD IS AN ADVANTAGED CHILD?

Most people think of gifted children as advantaged children who receive lots of press coverage and attention and who are well-supported. This may be true for the precocious musician, the potential chess grandmaster or the exceptional athlete. But these are the 'exotic' cases who form only a tiny minority of gifted children. Many, many more remain unrecognized and unsupported. They are the children who, despite their capacity for unrestricted learning and creative thought, frequently fail to be recognized and given the challenge that they need.

- Gifted children are not recognized when they deliberately respond to peer pressures by conforming to expectations, avoiding standing out from the crowd or avoiding bullying, instead of following their own aspirations. (Though a child may see himself as different, he finds it easier to keep quiet about it.)
- When their real needs remain unrecognized they become to her teacher no more than the theoretical average child - and are challenged accordingly.
- The gifted child may become invisible to avoid being squashed and constantly put down, rather than revealing potential in class when to do so might be seen as a threat (unless the teacher is extremely understanding and aware), be discouraged for always knowing the answer, or be viewed as disruptive for perceiving inconsistencies or questioning the purpose of an activity. Talents may then become hidden - hidden, that is, not from choice but as a response to the messages of disapproval received from society.

