

# Is my child gifted or talented?

Every parent knows his or her child is special and each one **is** unique. Children continually astound us on a daily basis with their memory, ability, learning capacity, and the ability to soak up knowledge. And rightly so! But when is that ability, memory, capacity, talent, a little too unnervingly advanced? When does a child fall into the category of gifted or talented?

There is no universal definition of what gifted and talented is, but the generally accepted one is that a *gifted* child has ability developed way beyond his year group in one or more academic subjects. When these abilities occur in the areas of music, art, sports and expressive arts, the term *talented* is used. A child may be especially gifted in one area, e.g. maths, in two areas, e.g. maths and language, or across the board. Similarly in talented: a child may be a good all-round sportsman or just adept in one area, e.g. football.

However, recognising a gifted and talented child is not always simple: many factors may hide the ability. A child may have 'dual-exceptionality' where he has a gift for learning coupled with a special need such as dyslexia or dyspraxia. This can be extremely frustrating both for the parent and the child especially if the school only uses assessments that involve 'pencil and paper' tests. Some high ability children may be able to demonstrate leadership qualities or a capacity for creative thought but never be given an opportunity to demonstrate these. Talented children may simply never have an opportunity to try the area in which their talent lies: soccer, rugby, athletics, playing a musical instrument etc. Many gifted and talented children therefore do not shine at school: in fact they may well underachieve so much so that they cause great worry to all concerned, their potential masked by factors such as frustration, low self-esteem, lack of challenge, or low teacher/parent expectations.

It clearly then, is in everyone's interest to recognise gifts and talents as soon as possible and certainly to offer as many opportunities to children as possible so that they may discover their own special gifts. So how can you tell? Although there is no universal list of character traits that can be ticked off (and sadly children are not born with a bar code across their foreheads which may be zipped on a reader and printed off!) there are certain characteristics which commonly occur and which can therefore help to identify high ability children.

The following questionnaire has been compiled to help you to identify whether your child may be gifted or talented; this is **not** an exact science and it will only give you an indication. Please note however that there is no need for you then to have the child tested to prove it! The knowledge will simply give you some focus and understanding. It is important to remember that your child does not need to have all of these characteristics to be gifted. Please note the term 'he' has been used throughout simply for ease –there are just as many female gifted and talented children as male!!!

# My child:



Is extremely curious and relentlessly asks questions He wants to know how things are inter-related	
Has an extraordinary memory and can recall events he has experienced, seen on television or heard read from books many months later	
Prefers the company of adults or older children to that of his own age	
Has a vivid imagination and tells fascinating stories (may also have an array of imaginary friends, suffer from night terrors and/or have vivid dreams which he can recount in detail)	
Can concentrate for long periods of time on a particular task or activity especially when chosen by himself	
Has a very advanced vocabulary and spoke in complete sentences very early	
Reached his developmental milestones well ahead of his peers	
Has a deep interest in a hobby or activity- this may be intense but short-lived as he quickly moves onto the next!	
Gets very deeply affected by world issues - can get very upset by events he sees on the television, especially the News	
Has a strong sense of fairness and justice and will argue his case with great passion	
May appear arrogant to other adults as he has no inhibitions and wants to know justifications and reasons for requests or demands made to or placed on him	
Picks up adult phrases and uses them in an appropriate way	
Is highly active	
Needed less sleep	
Has an excellent, if at times odd, sense of humour	
Shows advanced abstract reasoning and problem-solving skills – can often complete puzzles and games designed for children beyond his age range	
Shows very intense reactions to noise, pain and frustration	
Has an exceptional ability in a particular area or subject i.e. unusually good with numbers, an instrument or artistic flair.	
Is intrinsically or self-motivated	
Is a perfectionist – gets very annoyed with himself if unable to do a task well. May even avoid doing tasks if he knows that he is not good at it.	
Gets annoyed with his peers if they are not adept at a task	
Shows original and elaborate thinking in games with other peers – makes up his own more complicated rules	
Is very sensitive and gets upset easily	

## **My child shows the majority of these characteristics, what should I do now?**

### **Do not:**

- **Panic** There are agencies who can help and who understand some of the challenges you are facing and may face in the future but do remember that many gifted children sail through school with no problems whatsoever! One of the best of these agencies is the National Association for Gifted Children who run a Helpline especially for parents and teachers. They have a membership scheme and run Family Days and other events for gifted children to mix and work together. See below for details.
- **Rush to have your child psychologically tested** There is very little point in this unless at some point your child appears to be vastly underachieving and the school does not recognise his high ability or when the child appears to have a dual-exceptionality (high ability together with a special need)

### **Do:**

- **offer** your child as many opportunities as possible to satisfy his insatiable appetite for knowledge
- **join** a library
- **take him to social events** where he can mix with children of different ages including his peers. encourage his interests.
- **above all, talk to him**, ask him questions and answer as many of his as you can, although you may find yourself quickly out of your depth!
- **encourage** him to take part in physical, musical and artistic abilities—who knows what talent is just waiting to be awoken!

## **My child does not show the many of these characteristics, what should I do now?**

All of the above!! just because you have not identified any special gift or talent yet, there is much your child has yet to learn and it may just be that he has not yet had an opportunity to discover or demonstrate his gift.

## **Organisations and or useful websites for further information**

National Association of Gifted Children  
[www.nagcbritain.org.uk](http://www.nagcbritain.org.uk)

Gifted Children Information Centre  
Tel: 0121 705 4547.

National Association for Able Children in Education  
<http://www.nace.co.uk/home.htm>

**To be a parent is a very special privilege—ENJOY IT!!!**