

A Service Bulletin by  
National Association for  
Gifted Children (NAGC)  
and  
Supporting Emotional  
Needs of the Gifted (SENG)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
Gifted Children



# Is My Child Gifted?



## Is My Child Gifted?

All children are special and have their own areas of strength. However, some children have unusually advanced abilities that require special adjustments at home and school to help them grow and learn. As you watch your child grow and develop, you may notice skills or characteristics that are quite different from those of other children the same age. For example, your child may:

- Be very curious and observant
- Use adult-sounding words and reasoning
- Think of many unusual ideas
- Recognize complex patterns or relationships
- Come to surprising solutions to problems
- Show a strong memory
- Ask unusual questions
- Demonstrate advanced talent in a certain area (such as mathematics, science, writing, art, music, or drama)
- Learn letters or numbers early and read before being formally taught

Children can show giftedness in a variety of ways, and often parents are the first to notice special abilities. If you are seeing a number of these behaviors in your children, it might be a signal that their development is somewhat advanced.

## What Should I Do If I Believe My Child is Gifted?

Family members play an important role in providing learning experiences for children. You can recognize and build on the strengths and talents you witness in your children. Encourage your children's curiosity and creativity. Help your children find activities they love. Give your children opportunities to take healthy risks as they explore the wonder around them. Like all children, young gifted children need to become comfortable with trying new things and learning from mistakes. When your child has mastered one activity, present an opportunity for new challenges. Recognize that your child may be ready for experiences earlier than other children, and that his or her questions and interests may surprise and challenge you. Educate yourself about gifted children and about learning opportunities for them in your community. There may be times when you wish to consult with your family physician or a psychologist who has experience working with gifted children.



## Where Can I Get More Information?

You should visit the websites of two national organizations for premier resources and information about gifted children and the supports they need at home and at school.

The Internet also provides ready access to information about giftedness and is often the best first step in finding the information you need to guide your child. You can also contact your state department of education and your state's gifted education association for information about your state's policies and resources to support gifted children.

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## What Should I Do If I Believe My Child Isn't Sufficiently Challenged in School?

You know your child better than anyone else, and that makes you your child's best advocate. Gifted learners benefit when parents and schools work in partnership to recognize and respond to children's advanced learning needs. Consult with your child's teacher to learn more about what is happening in the classroom and to share observations about your child's strengths and interests. There may be gifted programs, gifted specialists, or other resources in your school or district to help you and your child. Many options exist for gifted children, including enrichment pull-out classes, cluster grouping, subject or grade skipping, independent studies, and summer or weekend gifted programs. You and the school can work together to determine the best program to meet your child's needs. Learn about parent advocacy and advisory groups in your district and how you can get involved. Some school districts are very responsive to the needs of gifted children, while others are not. It is important to be respectful and patient, but equally important to persevere and be determined.



## What If My Child Shows Strengths in Some Areas And Weaknesses in Others?

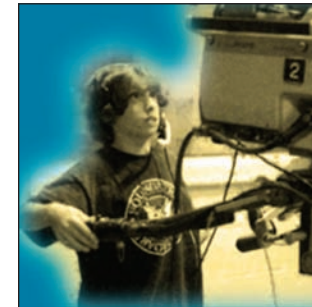
Some gifted children may show strengths across all academic areas and continue to excel throughout school. Other gifted children may excel in one area, but be average or even below average in another area. Still other gifted children may start by showing high achievement across all areas, but later demonstrate high ability only in one or two areas. It is not uncommon for gifted children to show an uneven pattern of performance. However, if a child is significantly struggling in an area, consult with school professionals about the possibility of a learning disability. Children can be gifted and also have a learning disability. A trained psychologist and school personnel can work together to develop an educational plan that will respond to both the giftedness and the learning disability.

### Can Giftedness Cause Behavior Problems?

Gifted children are children first, and like all children may sometimes misbehave. Although giftedness itself doesn't cause behavior problems, some of the special characteristics of giftedness may affect behavior. For example, gifted children are often intense and strong-willed. Some gifted children are overly perfectionistic and impatient with themselves and others. Gifted children may also sound so adult-like that parents sometimes expect behavior beyond their children's level of maturity. In school, gifted children may sometimes act out because they are not being academically challenged.

## Can Children with Behavior and Learning Difficulties Also Be Gifted?

Some gifted children also have disabilities that impact learning, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and other challenges. In these cases, schools and families should provide support to respond to both the giftedness and the learning difficulty. In some cases, behavioral interventions and medication are possible responses. Education and medical professionals will help to make an appropriate intervention plan for children with these types of dual exceptionalities, but it is important that the characteristics of giftedness be considered in that planning.



It is important to know that some gifted children, particularly those with high energy and difficulty with self-control or focus who are not challenged in school or at home, can show behaviors similar to those of a child with a diagnosis of ADHD.



It is important for medical professionals to include attention to a child's ability and school environment in making an assessment for ADHD.

## How Can My Health Care Professional Help?

Physicians can provide important support, guidance, and referrals for parents of gifted children. Your pediatrician can describe general patterns of development, which may help you understand if certain aspects of your child's development might be advanced. If you feel your child is highly advanced and needs early attention, or if you feel your child may have behavioral or learning difficulties, pediatricians can refer you to psychologists or other medical professionals for appropriate assessments.

Pediatricians and family practitioners are general physicians trained to prevent, diagnose, and treat common health problems, and giftedness is not a medical condition. Many pediatricians and family practitioners are not familiar with giftedness and its relevance to behavior and development. You can help your physician and your child by talking about your child's unusual abilities as part of a total health assessment. It is important that physicians have information that enables them to be more helpful to parents of gifted children.

