

Twelve Traits of Giftedness: A Non-Biased Profile

Trait, Aptitude, or Behavior	Description	How It May Look
Motivation	Evidence of desire to learn. Internal drive	Demonstrates persistence in pursuing or completing self--selected tasks (may be culturally influenced); Evident in school or non-school activities Enthusiastic learner; has aspirations to be somebody, to do something
Interests	Intense, sometimes unusual, interests.	Unusual or advanced interests, topic, or activity; self-starter; pursues an activity unceasingly beyond the group.
Communication Skills	Highly expressive with words, numbers, or symbols.	Unusual ability to communicate (verbally, nonverbally, physically, artistically, or symbolically; uses particularly apt examples, illustrations, or elaborations).
Problem-Solving Ability	Effective, often inventive, strategies for recognizing and solving problems.	Unusual ability to devise or adopt a systematic strategy to solve problems and to change the strategy if it is not working; Creates new designs; Inventor.
Memory	Large storehouse of information on school or non-school topics.	Already knows; needs only 1 - 2 repetitions for mastery; has a wealth of information about school and non-school topics; pays attention to details; manipulates information.
Inquiry/Curiosity	Questions, experiments, explores.	Asks unusual questions for age; plays around with ideas; extensive exploratory behaviors directed toward eliciting information about materials, devices, or situations.
Insight	Quickly grasps new concepts; Sees connections; Senses deeper meanings.	Exceptional ability to draw inferences; appears to be a good guesser; is keenly observant; heightened capacity for seeing unusual and diverse relationships, integration of ideas and disciplines.
Imagination/Creativity	Produces many ideas; highly original.	Shows exceptional ingenuity in using everyday materials; is keenly observant; has wild, seemingly silly ideas; fluent, flexible producer of ideas; highly curious.
Humor	Conveys and picks up on humor well.	Keen sense of humor that may be gentle or hostile: large accumulation of information about emotions; capacity for seeing unusual; uncommon emotional depth; openness to experiences; sensory awareness.
Intensity "Overexcitabilities"	Strength of reactions, responses, behaviors. (The term "overexcitabilities" comes from Polish psychologist Dabrowski.)	Intense desire for experiences in the area(s) of overexcitability; powerful emotions; seeks intellectual stimulation; sensory experiences evoke strong responses; constant or repetitive movement or gesturing; intense fantasy life; may need creative outlets for intensity.
Reasoning	Logical approaches to figuring out solutions	Ability to make generalizations and use metaphors and analogies; can think things through in a logical manner; critical thinker.
Sensitivity	Strong reactions to emotional stimuli.	Strong sense of compassion; keen sense of justice; empathy; moral and ethical sensibilities; sense of being "different" socially; existential worrying; often overly self-critical.

(A student does not have to show all twelve traits to be considered gifted.)

Characteristics of Twice-Exceptional Gifted Children

Twice-exceptional students have a significant learning difficulties and the talent or potential for outstanding accomplishments that require special provisions to meet their educational needs. Established state and federal guidelines are used to identify both gifted and students with disabilities.

Early identification and intervention is critical; however, giftedness in the twice-exceptional often is identified later than in the average population and is masked by the disability. The disabilities may include auditory processing weaknesses, sensory motor integration issues, visual perceptual difficulties, spatial disorientation, dyslexia, and attention deficits. Recognition of learning difficulties among the gifted is made extremely difficult by virtue of their ability to compensate. Some guidelines that help in identifying these students are as follows

- Exceptional Vocabulary
- Difficulty with written expression
- Ability to understand complex ideas
- Easily frustrated
- Wide area of interest
- Highly sensitive
- Creative
- Stubborn and opinionated
- Specific areas of strength
- Inconsistent academic performance
- Highly developed sense of humor
- Curious and inquisitive

Characteristics of the Gifted Underachiever

Underachievement is usually defined as a discrepancy between the child's school performance and some index of his or her actual ability, such as intelligence, achievement, or creativity scores, or observational data. It is important to compare the actual school performance to the performance that would be expected based on the IQ scores. According to Davis and Rimm, "The underachieving gifted child represents both society's greatest loss and its greatest potential resource." Some underachieving gifted have poor test-taking habits and skills, and as a result perform poorly on any test. Even though the child has significant potential for high achievement, he/she is not using his talent in positive ways. Dealing with the underachieving pattern is often frustrating for the child, parents and teachers. Characteristics of the gifted underachiever include:

- Achieving at or below grade level expectations in one or all of the basic skill areas.
- Exhibits feelings of helplessness and rejection and often takes no responsibility for his/her actions, externalizing conflict and behavior.
- Excellent comprehension and retention of concepts when interested.
- Large gap between the oral/written work.
- Creative and imaginative.
- Persistent dissatisfaction of own work.
- Evidence of perfectionism interfering with production.

- Evidence of low self-esteem masked often
- by bravado, rebellion, and complex defense mechanisms.
- Initiates projects in areas of interest at home.
- Group interaction skills are marginal or non-existent. Maintains few friendships.
- Tends to set unrealistic expectations for self-either too high or too low.
- Has difficulty in focusing attention and concentrating.
- Has an indifferent or negative attitude toward school and authority.
- Resists efforts to motivate or to discipline in the classroom.
- Avoids any risk of losing and does not build resilience to cope with losing situations.
- Poor test performance.

Characteristics of the Visual-Spatial Gifted Child

The child with visual-spatial strengths will perceive the world far differently than those thinking sequentially. They will often see the whole picture before understanding the parts and may become frustrated at drill and practice learning. Visual-spatial learners think in pictures rather than words and can show amazing ability with complex tasks while having difficulty with seemingly easy tasks. Other characteristics of this type of learner include:

- Excellent ability with puzzles and mazes
- Superior/intuitive questioning ability
- Photographic visual memory
- Develops own methods of problem solving
- Attracted to computer technology
- Excellent math conceptualization
- Learns best by seeing relationships
- Must visualize words to spell them
- Development is very uneven
- Very sensitive to teachers' attitudes
- Creates unique methods of organization
- Synthesizes information easily
- Learns concepts all at once
- Better at math reasoning than computation
- Good problem finder
- Original, creative thinker
- Prefers keyboarding to writing
- Reads maps well

Characteristics of Gifted Girls

Even though society's expectations for girls have been raised, we still need to examine the type of encouragement given to girls and the consequences of achievement for women. The pattern for women's success is far more complicated than that for men. In the past and still today in some cases, secure, self-sufficient, successful, self-actualizing gifted women have not been commonly found or supported by our

society. Many gifted girls are overlooked at home, in school, and in society. Success often inhibits social life for females; many gifted girls will submerge their gifts and talents to be popular. Gifted children tend to develop more quickly than other children, and gifted girls usually develop even more quickly in the first few years.

- Girls need to be encouraged to manipulate the environment, rather than just sitting and observing passively.
- Gifted girls should be allowed to reject traditional feminine sex-typed behaviors. The more creative females are less oriented to the traditional sex-role stereotyping.
- With mixed expectations and fewer successful role models to follow, gifted girls become confused about how to pursue a truly satisfying future.
- Girls need encouragement in independence and intellectual aggressiveness.
- Girls seem to believe if they succeed, it is luck; if they fail, it is their fault. Boys reverse this view for their successes and failures.
- Gifted girls tend to set impossible goals and to strive continually to achieve at ever higher levels - e.g. supermom.

Characteristics of Minority Students

Behavioral styles and cultural values affect manifestations of giftedness; differing values influence how each culture manifests behaviors indicating giftedness. The way minority students express their giftedness may be valued less by the dominant culture; gifted minority students may be overlooked in the identification process. The gifted minority student may or may not display certain characteristics, depending on ethnic composition of a classroom.