

Summary

Parents are often the first to spot that their child is ahead of others of the same age. Other people may have commented on your child's abilities and vocabulary. Below is a guide to the characteristics and abilities that are common amongst gifted children aged between 12 months and 4 years. Whilst the ages given are a rough guide, as each child is unique and progresses in different areas at different rates, they provide a useful list to help you determine whether your young child is gifted.

Characteristics of Young Gifted Children

- Unusual alertness as a baby
- Interest in books
- Interest in computers
- Unusually active and high levels of energy (but not hyperactive)
- May require less sleep (yet not sleepy or irritable due to lack of sleep)
- Early and extensive language development and vocabulary, forms grammatically correct sentences as compared to peers
- Has a vivid imagination (includes having imaginary friends)
- Extraordinary feats of memory
- Extreme curiosity and asks many questions
- Ability to memorize and recall facts easily
- Early development of a sense of humour
- May see solutions that don't occur to others
- Interest in abstract terms (e.g. time or space)
- Advanced sense of justice and fairness (and may not understand responses of peers)
- Strongly motivated to do things that interest, unwilling to do other activities

Abilities of Young Gifted Children

- Could stay still and enjoy a TV programme at 12 months
- Has favourite TV shows/VCD/DVDs at 12 months
- Ability to form two word phrases by 14 months
- Ability to understand instructions by 18 months
- Ability to say and understand many words before 18 months
- Recognition of letters/alphabets by age 2
- Recognition and rote counting of numbers 1 – 10 or higher by age 2
- Recognition of colours by age 2
- Recognition of first word by age 2
- Interest in puzzles by age 2
- Has long attention span in interest areas by age 2
- Ability to form at least 3 word sentence by age 2
- Ability to solve a 20-piece puzzle by age 3
- Recognition of simple signs and own written name by age 3
- Ability to write letters, numbers, words, and their names between 3 and 4 years
- Ability to read easy readers by age 4
- Specific talent (if any), such as artistic ability or an unusual facility for numbers - becomes more apparent by age 4
- Rather independent on the computer by age 4
- Ability to do simple addition and subtraction by age 4
- High degree of mathematical understanding by age 4

Early Readers, Deep Readers

Many young gifted children teach themselves to read at a very early age. By the time they enter early childhood education they may already be sounding out letters, reading signs, or reading accurately both aloud and silently. Some children are such good readers that their silent reading speeds may cause it to seem as if they are skimming through picture books. They may also be concentrating so deeply on their reading that they are unaware of people speaking to them, or teachers attempting to engage their attention. As many adults assume children must be taught to read, even parents can be surprised by the reading abilities of their child!

Hypersensitive

Many gifted children are hypersensitive; emotionally, sensually and / or physically.

- Emotional hypersensitivity (or over excitability) can be demonstrated through extreme emotion, anxiety, concern for others, difficulty adjusting to change and may ask many questions about pain, death, anger, love.
- Sensual hypersensitivity (or over excitability) is a heightened sense of the five senses and can be demonstrated through tactile sensitivity (tags in clothes for example), sensitivity to loud noises, and appreciation of beauty in music or art or attachment to treasured toys.
- Physical (or psychomotor) hypersensitivity (or over excitability) is primarily indicated by a surplus of energy and can also be demonstrated through compulsive talking, nervous habits, physical expression of emotions and sleeplessness.

Twice Exceptional

A child can be both gifted and have special educational needs (when this is the case the child is often called Twice Exceptional or Dual Exceptional). Common learning disabilities that are seen alongside giftedness are dyspraxia, ADHD, Asperger’s Syndrome. For more information see NAGC Fact Sheet P60 – Twice Exceptionality.

Further Information

P02 Your Young Gifted Child at Preschool or Nursery	NAGC Factsheet about issues that may arise at preschool/nursery and how to support the young gifted child.
P03 Your Young Gifted Child at Home	NAGC Factsheet about behaviour and activities of young gifted children at home.
<i>How to Raise a Bright Child</i> by Dr Joan Freeman	This book offers advice on stimulating young children, how young minds develop and learn, ways to make learning fun for pre-school age children and how to encourage motivation at school, as well as providing specific help on subjects such as dyslexia, learning to read and children who are brighter than their age group.
<i>Gifted Young Children</i> by Louise Porter	<i>Gifted Young Children</i> is a practical guide to identifying and supporting young children who may be gifted or talented. It explains how teachers and parents can promote the children’s emotional and social adjustment, including ways to enhance self-esteem, encourage friendships and support their autonomy. It also shows how parents can discuss giftedness with children and respond to their needs.
Website on Characteristics of Young Gifted Children	http://austega.com/gifted/characteristics.htm#checklist_menu