

Gifted or Just Smart?

Helping Gifted Children Soar: A Practical Resource for Parents and Teachers, Carol Strip and Gretchen Hirsch (2000)

The difference between a **gifted** and a **very smart** child, student, or adult is found in the depth and intensity of the following traits. When considering whether a child is gifted, the authors of the above-referenced book recommend that parents and teachers consider the intensity or degree to which they see the traits below.

1. Questioning style

Very smart – ask questions that have answers

Gifted – ask questions about abstract ideas, concepts, and theories without easy answers

2. Learning speed and application of concepts

Very smart – learn in a step-by-step fashion until they grasp a concept

Gifted – jump over steps and move quickly to concept understanding; do not like reconstructing steps

3. Emotional outlook

Very smart – Show emotion but can get over an upsetting incident fairly easily

Gifted – Experience heightened, all-consuming emotions and have difficulty getting over an upsetting incident

4. Level of interest

Very smart – Curious about a wide variety of things

Gifted – Show intense curiosity about nearly everything or immerse themselves in a topic of current interest

5. Language ability

Very smart – Learn new vocabulary easily but use words in speech typical for their age

Gifted – Use extensive and advanced vocabularies, understand verbal nuances, enjoy puns and word play, often talk over the heads of their age peers

6. Concern with fairness

Very smart – State firm opinions about fairness but in personal terms (“He has more than I do.”)

Gifted – Show intense concern about fairness and equity, typically on a more global scale. (Stories on the news related to war, famine, etc. are upsetting at times to the point of obsession)