

Twelve Traits of Giftedness

Trait, Aptitude, or Behavior	General Description	How It May Look	CLD (Culturally & Linguistically Diverse) Considerations
Motivation Evidence of desire to learn.	Internal drive or encouragement that initiates, directs, or sustains individual or group behavior in order to satisfy a need or attain a goal.	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.	Competitiveness may not be valued. Group achievement may be valued over individual accomplishment.
Interests Intense, sometimes unusual, interests.	Activities, avocations, objects, etc. that have special worth or significance and are given special attention.	Unusual or advanced interests, topics, or activities; self-starter; pursues an activity unceasingly beyond the group.	Some students may prefer teacher-directed learning. In some other cultures, individual choice is preferred for learning activities.
Communication Skills Highly expressive with words, numbers, or symbols.	Transmission and reception of signals or meanings through a system of symbols (codes, gestures, language, and numbers).	Unusual ability to communicate (verbally, nonverbally, physically, artistically, symbolically; uses particularly apt examples, illustrations, or elaborations.	May see strong interpersonal skills or a preference for unassertive or indirect ways of self-expression. May prefer to use collective ideas.
Problem-Solving Ability Effective, often inventive, strategies for recognizing and solving problems.	Process of determining a correct sequence of alternatives leading to a desired goal or to successful completion of a performance task.	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.	May prefer community-based problem-solving.
Memory Large storehouse of information on school or non-school topics.	Exceptional ability to retain and retrieve information.	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.	What the student chooses to memorize may be different from teacher’s expectations. May use stories & legends as a memory tool.
Inquiry/Curiosity Questions, experiments, explores.	Method or process of seeking knowledge, understanding, or information.	Asks unusual questions for age; plays around with ideas; extensive exploratory behaviors directed toward eliciting information about materials, devices, or situations.	Sometimes not as highly valued in other cultures—may prefer teacher direction.
Insight Quickly grasps new concepts; sees connections; senses deeper meanings.	Sudden discovery of correct solution following attempts based primarily on trial and error; putting disparate elements together in unexpected ways.	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.	May be intuitive or holistic thinkers.

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Reasoning Logical approaches to figuring out solutions.	Highly conscious, directed, controlled, active, intentional forward-looking, and goal-oriented thought.	Ability to make generalizations and use metaphors and analogies; can think things through in a logical manner; critical thinker; ability to think things through and come up with a plausible answer.	May demonstrate problem-solving in group setting, rather than individually. Some cultures value approximation over accuracy.
Imagination/Creativity Produces many ideas; highly original.	Process of forming mental images of objects; qualities, situations, or relationships which aren't immediately apparent to the senses; problem-solving through nontraditional patterns of thinking.	Shows exceptional ingenuity in using everyday materials; is keenly observant; has wild, seemingly silly ideas; fluent, flexible producer of ideas; highly curious.	May be demonstrated through storytelling, dancing, writing, art, poetry, or creative thinking.
Humor Conveys and picks up on humor well.	Ability to synthesize key ideas or problems in complex situations in a humorous way; exceptional sense of timing in words or gestures.	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.	Need to be aware that humor is culturally-based.
Intensity (“Overexcitabilities”) Strength of reactions, responses, behaviors. (The term “overexcitabilities” comes from Polish psychologist Dabrowski.)	Very strong, even extreme, responses to stimuli in five areas: emotional, intellectual, sensory, psychomotor, and imagination.	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.	Individual drive may not be highly valued. Some cultures have a preference for novelty and personal freedom.
Sensitivity Strong reactions to emotional stimuli.	Events and situations in the affective and social domains elicit a stronger response than usual.	Strong sense of compassion; keen sense of justice; empathy; moral and ethical sensibilities; sense of being “different” socially; existential worrying; often overly self-critical.	May demonstrate a keen sense of injustice, awareness of the environment & people around them, or personal & religious integrity.

Adapted from material from the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented and Mary Ruth Coleman, Ph.D., University of North Carolina.