

20 Helpful Hints for Parents of Gifted Children

Adapted from Gina Ginsberg-Riggs

1. Remember! Gifted children are children first and gifted second. A five year old may be able to solve mathematical problems for a ten year old. However, he has only lived for five years, and it's likely that his physical, social and emotional behavior will be more typical of what is reasonable for a five year old.
2. Enjoy! Your gifted child may try your stamina and endurance at times, but enthusiasm and zest for learning will more than make up for the pace. Your argumentative youngster may be practicing to become a trial lawyer, and the artwork on your refrigerator may be on its way to rivaling Rembrandt (even though you can't tell which way is up). Relax and enjoy the excitement.
3. Listen! Dinner may be about to burn and the telephone may be ringing, but listen because the question may be important, and if ignored, the curiosity to ask may disappear.
4. Don't compare! Comparing your gifted child to others places the responsibility to be gifted ALL the time, and it isn't fair to whoever comes off second best. Every child is unique and special. No one should be expected to be gifted all the time in all ways.
5. Explore! It's a great big wonderful world. Show it to your child in the form of trips, books, music, museums, fire stations, interesting people, nature, and the magical chemistry that makes a cake rise.
6. Encourage! Let your child specialize if she wants. You may not enjoy living with dinosaurs twenty-four hours a day, but there are fringe benefits. She could be learning to research, take notes, increase her vocabulary, and enjoy learning. Her passion may continue into a career, or she may exhaust that interest and move to another passion.
7. Balance! Help your child balance his passions and interests, his drive for excellence and his need for intellectual peers with learning to set reasonable goals and expectations, with exploring other interests and activities and with working and playing with people of varying abilities and interests.
8. Daydream! Avoid overly structuring and scheduling. There should be a time to daydream, play, lie on the unmade bed and contemplate the ceiling or just stare off into their imagination. Gifted children are usually creative children, and it's hard to be creative on a schedule. Creation and innovation require incubation/down time.
9. Dream and aspire! Encourage your child's dreams and aspirations, even if they don't meet your own. You may dream of "my son, the doctor," but he may have other dreams and interests.
10. Encourage independence! Let your child do for herself what she can do. If she makes a mistake, has a setback or runs into a roadblock, turn it into a learning opportunity.
11. Praise! Praise him for the wonderful things he accomplishes. Praise her for the attempts at excellence. If the great experiment doesn't work, or the shaky tower of blocks collapses, or the idea for a projects doesn't quite work the first time, praise

the child for the attempt – and for adapting his plan and continuing to try to make it work.

12. **Risk!** Inquiring minds must take intellectual risks, and risk taking needs to be supported and praised. Provide constructive criticism, recognizing the effort and the courage to risk, and help your child recognize areas needing improvement.
13. **Get out of the way!** Recognize that there are times to reach out a helping hand and that there are times to get out of the way. Encourage your child to develop a sense of responsibility, ownership for his/her learning, attitude and behavior, and self-direction and motivation.
14. **Discipline!** Consistent discipline is necessary for all children. Giftedness is no excuse for unacceptable behavior.
15. **Value!** Let your home be a place where knowledge is valued, the quest for learning is respected and mistakes are seen as learning opportunities.
16. **Encourage!** Remember that the fine line between encouragement and pushing may make the difference between a happy and productive youngster and an unfulfilled, underachieving child.
17. **Volunteer!** Support the school's effort to provide for your child's special learning needs. Volunteer, keep the lines of communication open, and work as a team with the school to meet the needs of your child.
18. **Give room!** Being creative and having an intellectual curiosity takes up space and time. Provide room for books, magazines, and other materials for creative and intellectual exploration. Provide time for discussion of topics of interest by all members of the family.
19. **Connect!** Parents of gifted children need support, too. They may need help and guidance in understanding and appreciating the special needs of their children. They need to connect with other parents to share their concerns, frustrations and joys of raising a gifted child.
20. **Remember!** Don't expect your child to be gifted all the time in all areas.