A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS

My Kid Has Been Identified as Gifted… Now What?

A Sanity-Saving, Eye-Roll-Reducing, Reality-Accepting Guide for Real Parents in Real Homes

Welcome to the club you weren’t sure you belonged to

Your child has been identified as gifted. Maybe that felt like long-overdue recognition, a surprise, or a mixed blessing. Now there’s a new question:

> **What now, at home, when your kid is debating philosophy at bedtime, melting down over a broken crayon, or declaring homework “boring and meaningless”?**

This guide focuses on daily parenting: supporting advanced abilities while remembering that your child is still a child. Appropriate school challenge matters, and so do friendships, rest, coping skills, and reasonable household expectations.

Giftedness 101

Giftedness refers to advanced ability or potential in one or more areas compared with others of similar age, experience, or environment. Identification methods vary. Ask what your child’s identification actually tells you about their strengths and educational needs.

Some children develop unevenly, sometimes called asynchronous development. Advanced reasoning can coexist with age-typical coping, handwriting, or organization. A sophisticated vocabulary does not make a child a miniature adult.

Giftedness is not a mental health diagnosis or a guarantee of high grades, emotional intensity, sensory sensitivity, or effortless success. Those experiences vary, and persistent struggles deserve attention in their own right.

> **Use the label to understand learning needs. Keep getting to know the whole child.**

The patterns in this guide may occur in gifted children, but they are not a checklist for identifying giftedness. Adapt strategies to your child’s individual strengths, development, and needs.

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A strong argument is still not a bedtime

01 Debates over everything

You might see: Negotiating, questioning rules, and presenting closing arguments about showering.

• Hear the point without matching the intensity. Give a brief explanation when useful; you don’t have to win a debate before holding a reasonable limit.

• Offer choices within boundaries: “You can shower before or after book time.”

• Make room for respectful disagreement and input when the decision is flexible. Be clear when it isn’t.

> **“You can disagree with the rule. Tonight, the rule still applies.”**

02 Perfectionism & shame spirals

You might see: Refusing to try, tearing up a drawing, or treating one mistake as evidence of total failure.

• Notice strategies, revision, help-seeking, and willingness to try. Effort matters, but so does learning when to change the approach.

• Normalize being a beginner: “You haven’t learned this yet. Let’s find the first step.” Avoid promising they’ll master everything if they just persist.

• Share an ordinary mistake and what you did next. A funny flop can help when your child is ready to laugh, not in the middle of their distress.

03 Big emotional reactions

You might see: Tears over unfairness, frustration with mistakes, or an intense reaction to a small setback.

• Validate without explaining the feeling away: “That really upset you.” Keep safety limits clear.

• Create a coping plan together when calm. Practice pausing, asking for help, and returning to the problem.

• Do not assume giftedness is the cause. Frequent or severe dysregulation deserves its own assessment.

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Sensory needs and very large questions

04 Sensory sensitivities

You might hear: “These socks hurt.” “That smell is too much.” “I hate the sound of chewing.”

• Take discomfort seriously. Ask what bothers them and try a practical adjustment, such as different socks, unscented soap, or appropriate hearing protection.

• Teach self-advocacy: “This noise is hard for me. Can I sit somewhere quieter?” Look for ways to support participation.

• If sensitivities significantly restrict daily life, discuss them with the pediatrician or a qualified professional. Sensory concerns are not evidence of giftedness and may have other explanations.

> **“I believe that feels uncomfortable. Let’s find a way to make this manageable.”**

05 Existential questions at 8:00 PM

You might hear: “What if I die?” “What if you die?” “Why are we here?” Just as you reach for the light switch.

• Ask what they mean and what prompted the question. Curiosity, worry, and hopelessness need different responses.

• Offer a brief, honest, age-appropriate answer. You don’t need a complete theory of the universe before bedtime.

• If it’s curiosity, suggest a book or a daytime conversation. If it’s worry, name the feeling and help them use a coping step.

> **“That’s an important question. Are you curious about it, or is it making you feel scared?”**

Repeated distress about death, hopelessness, or statements about not wanting to live deserve professional attention. Do not dismiss them as a sign of a deep thinker. See page 6 for urgent concerns.

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Potential is not a daily performance requirement

You may push too hard

Because you see their potential. And because an enrichment opportunity can start to sound suspiciously like an obligation.

> **“Is this challenge useful and interesting to my child, or am I anxious about wasting potential?”**

Ask for their input. Appropriate challenge should leave room for play, friendships, and rest. Not every interest needs a competition attached.

You may expect maturity to match vocabulary

They can explain an impressive concept and still need help handling disappointment. Match your support to the skill in front of you, not to their most advanced skill.

> **Knowing the word “dysregulated” does not automatically teach anyone how to calm down.**

You may miss boredom, or overuse it as an explanation

“This is stupid” might mean the task is too easy. It might also mean it is difficult, confusing, repetitive, or frightening to attempt. Ask which part is getting in the way.

Check with the teacher about what your child already understands, what they still need to learn, and whether the task is a good fit. Advanced ability does not mean every skill develops without teaching.

You may feel isolated

It can feel awkward to ask for help with your “smart kid’s” struggles. Find people who can discuss strengths and difficulties without minimizing either. Parent groups and professionals can be useful when they make room for individual differences.

> **Your child can have advanced abilities and genuine support needs. Both deserve to be taken seriously.**

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Challenge, support, and room to be a kid

• **Teach coping intentionally.** Model handling mistakes, repairing conflict, and asking for help. A child does not acquire those skills simply by reasoning well.

• **Keep warmth and limits together.** Understanding the need behind a behavior does not mean allowing harm or disrespect.

• **Protect ordinary childhood.** Unstructured play and doing something for fun belong alongside enrichment.

Homework

Break work into manageable parts. Ask the teacher about appropriate challenge and alternative ways to demonstrate mastery. More worksheets are not automatically better enrichment.

When performance drops, investigate rather than assuming boredom or laziness. Consider task fit, skill gaps, executive functioning, sleep, mood, and stress.

School

Bring specific examples of strengths and struggles. Ask what your child has mastered, how learning will be extended, and what support they need. Collaborate around observable needs rather than attributing every behavior to gifted intensity.

Social life

Offer chances to connect with age peers and others who share interests. Enjoying adult conversation does not remove the need for friendships or prove that other children are a poor fit.

Practice reciprocal conversation: asking about another person’s interests, checking whether they want more detail, and taking turns. Adapting communication is a skill, not a betrayal of identity.

Sleep

Keep a predictable wind-down. Write down a question or idea to revisit tomorrow. Quiet audio may help some children; choose something that settles rather than stimulates. Persistent sleep problems deserve attention.

> **“We can save that idea for tomorrow. You don’t have to finish thinking about everything tonight.”**

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YOUR NEXT STEP

Raise a person, not a percentile

A note to the parent who is trying

You will sometimes push too hard, back off too far, or lose your patience. Repair the mistake and adjust the plan. Your child needs someone interested in who they are, not just what they can achieve.

Structure and flexibility. Challenge and rest. Encouragement and boundaries. The balance will shift as your child grows, and you can keep learning what helps.

> **“I enjoy who you are. You don’t have to impress me to matter to me.”**

Start with three questions

Strength: Where does my child need more challenge?
Support: Which everyday skill needs teaching or help?
Balance: Is there enough room for play, friendship, and rest?

When to seek more support

Giftedness can coexist with ADHD, learning disabilities, autism, or other conditions. Gifted children with a disability are often described as twice-exceptional. Advanced skills can obscure difficulties, and difficulties can obscure strengths. Seek an evaluation when struggles persist or interfere with daily life.

If your child mentions suicide or self-harm, ask directly and seek urgent professional assessment. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis guidance. Call 911 for immediate danger, an attempt, or a possible overdose.

Further reading

National Association for Gifted Children
nagc.org/what-is-giftedness
nagc.org/myths-about-gifted-students
NAGC • Asynchronous Development Parent TIP Sheet
NAGC • Identifying and Serving Twice-Exceptional Children

National Institute of Mental Health
NIMH • 5 Action Steps for Suicide Prevention

This guide offers general education. Gifted children are a diverse group; use supports based on your child’s individual learning, developmental, and health needs.

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