

THE SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR

Gifted Kids



For Ages
10 & Under

Judy Galbraith

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PUBLISHING®

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"If you are a gifted kid; a gifted kid's mom or dad, teacher, or counselor; or if you even speak with a gifted kid occasionally—do yourself a big favor and read this book." —*Gifted Education Communicator*

"Excellent and clearly written. This book will help gifted children understand themselves and how to relate to others. I highly recommend it."

—James T. Webb, Ph.D., psychologist and author of *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*

"[A] well-organized, kid-friendly handbook that parents, educators, and anyone who works with children will also value." —*Youth Today*

THE SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR

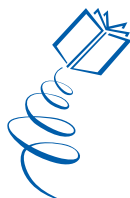
Gifted Kids

For Ages **10 & Under**
Revised & Updated 3rd Edition

Judy Galbraith, M.A.

Edited by Meg Bratsch, Illustrated by Nancy Meyers

free spirit
PUBLISHING®



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Library of Congress has cataloged the previous version as follows:

Galbraith, Judy.

The gifted kids' survival guide : for ages 10 & under / Judy Galbraith ; edited by Meg Bratsch ; illustrated by Nancy Meyers. — Rev. & updated 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-57542-322-7

1. Gifted children—Education (Elementary)—Juvenile literature. 2. Gifted children—Juvenile literature.

I. Bratsch, Meg. II. Meyers, Nancy, 1961– ill. III. Title.

LC3993.22.G35 2010

371.95'72—dc22

2009000189

ISBN: 978-1-57542-448-4

eBook ISBN: 978-1-57542-632-7

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The names of the young people quoted throughout the book have been changed to protect their privacy.

Reading Level Grade 5; Interest Level Ages 10 & Under;
Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading Level T

Edited by Meg Bratsch

Illustrated by Nancy Meyers

Cover and interior design by Michelle Lee

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Printed in the United States of America

S18861113

Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

Minneapolis, MN

(612) 338-2068

help4kids@freespirit.com

www.freespirit.com

**Printed on
recycled paper**



including 50%
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Dedication

To librarians everywhere who are terrific sources of information and book recommendations. When I was growing up, I spent many happy hours in the safe havens of libraries, and I felt supported by librarians who helped open the world of books to me.

To my mother . . . for giving me a good mind, and for raising me in a home where I was expected to use it well. I love books because of her, and I am ever grateful.

To my father . . . for teaching me to appreciate the wilderness (no matter how bad the weather), and for showing me the value of trying new things. I owe my adventuresome spirit to him.

Acknowledgments

One thousand students participated in the surveys for this book, and their responses were very important to its development. In addition, I'm grateful to all of the gifted young people who've written to me about their experiences growing up GT. Their letters telling me about their lives and the challenges, frustrations, and good things that go along with being GT are included within these pages. I'm especially appreciative of students' ideas, suggestions, and good humor. Hearing from readers always makes my day.

Many heartfelt thanks to Carla Valadez for meticulously tabulating the survey results for this third edition. Her efficient work and attention to detail was very much needed and appreciated.

I'd also like to thank the many parents and GT teachers who've contacted me over the years to let me know how kids in their care have benefited from *The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids*. Your words of encouragement and details about how you've used the book have helped to ensure the continuation of this "classic."

Last, but not least, I'd like to acknowledge my editor Meg Bratsch. Not only did she bring fine editing skills and creativity to this project, but her interest and enthusiasm made working on the book not like work at all. (Note to young readers: Meg was in GT classes when she grew up, so she's got firsthand experience just like you!) And special thanks go to designer Michelle Lee and illustrator Nancy Meyers. Your talents amaze me, and I appreciate all you've done to help this book be the best it can be.

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Welcome to The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids



Dear Reader,

Did you know that kids like you chose the title for this book? Many simply said that “The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids” describes exactly what they need—information and ideas about how to survive and *thrive* in school, with peers, and at home. The book you’re holding in your hands has answers you’re looking for, plus new things to think about and ideas to consider. It won’t answer all of your questions or solve all of your problems, and some of the experiences discussed might not be issues for you

at all. But it is my hope that this guide—your guide—will help you make sense of some of the puzzling, amazing, and stressful challenges you face as a GT.*

GTs have told me that when they know more about giftedness, they feel better about themselves. And when you feel good about who you are, it's easier to *be* who you are and to make the most of your talents and abilities. This book was written for you, with the help of others just like you. Read it front to back, back to front, side to side, or skip around.

You might choose to begin by taking the GT survey on pages 114–116 (if you haven't already) to see how your responses compare with survey responses quoted throughout the book. Surveys were completed by kids in urban, suburban, and rural areas of the United States. Some kids had been in GT programs for several years, maybe even since first grade. Others were in a GT class for the first time. And still others had been identified as gifted, but weren't in a program yet because they switched schools and their new school didn't have GT classes. An equal number of boys and girls took the survey.

Some really good things have happened since I was a GT teacher, did my original GT surveys, and wrote my first survival guide for gifted kids in the early 1980s. Programs to support gifted students have become more established, more comprehensive, and more accepted in schools. (There wasn't even such a thing as a gifted program when I was in school!) This is partly why gifted kids complain less about teasing now than they did years

A theory called “The Flynn Effect” claims that the IQ (intelligence quotient) of the world’s population is rising an average of 3 points every decade. If this is true, you are probably at least 8 IQ points *smarter* in certain ways than the kids who read my first book 25 years ago.

*Some gifted kids have said they don't like the label "gifted." Many prefer words like "smart," "intelligent," "accelerated," or "talented." I don't like labels either, but using "GT" in this book simplifies things. It stands for "Gifted and Talented," but you can decide what it means for you. Gargantuan Thinker? Gregarious Talker? Galactic Traveler? Good Thespian? Great Triathlete?

ago. Another big change is the Internet boom. Super-successful computer nerds with high IQs—like Larry Page and Sergey Brin (they founded Google) and Mitchell Baker (she launched the Mozilla Firefox browser)—and trendy technology companies—like The Geek Squad—have made it *cool* to be smart.

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) estimates there are approximately 3 million gifted kids in kindergarten through twelfth grade in the United States. That’s approximately 6 percent of the student population. So, while it sometimes might feel like you’re the only one experiencing what it’s like to be gifted, you’re actually part of a pretty large group of people, including the nearly 1,000 kids who took my GT survey. The truth is: you’re *not* alone.

About This Book

Throughout this book, watch for these repeating sections:

The **GTs Sound Off** sections contain actual quotes from kids who took the GT survey. See if you identify with some of the things these kids have to say.

The **Check It** boxes contain books, Web sites, and other places to check for more information.

The **Logophile** boxes include the meanings of words used in the book that you may or may not know. The dots between the letters indicate how the word is broken into syllables, so you know how to pronounce it.

Logophile

log·o·phile *noun*: a lover of words

The **Whiz Quiz** sections help you get to know your “inner GT” better and what it needs to thrive.

To jump-start learning about being GT, here's a short list of ways to succeed, no matter what your special talents and interests are. (It's also a sneak preview of topics covered in this book.)

5 Things GTs Need to Succeed

1. **Challenges.** Over and over gifted kids have told me they like to be challenged. In fact, many say it's harder for them to do simple things than it is to tackle difficult work. That means you need people, schoolwork, classes, activities, and opportunities that will S-T-R-E-T-C-H your mind.
2. **Self-esteem.** You need to feel pleased and proud of the person you are—*just the way you are*. This doesn't mean you can't or shouldn't try to be even better. But you need to believe in your own basic worth.
3. **Talk time.** You need opportunities to talk with people who respect and understand you. These people might be friends, family, or people at school or in your community. Let them know what you're thinking and how you're feeling. Ask them questions when you're confused, ask them for advice when you want it, and listen

Start a GT Journal

Writing in a journal is a great way to understand yourself better. It helps you organize your thinking and gives you the opportunity to express yourself whenever you need to. You might want to keep one as you read this book. Write your quiz answers, questions, opinions, ideas, frustrations, and joys about being GT. Decorate it, draw in it, doodle on it. Maybe even find a journal with a pocket where you can keep articles or pictures that you find related to giftedness.



closely to their feedback. The key is to find a few people you trust and talk with them regularly.

- 4. Self-awareness.** You need to know yourself. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Your hopes and dreams? Who are you, anyway? If you're unsure, how can you learn more about yourself? One way to develop self-awareness is by asking yourself questions like these: What do I enjoy doing the most? How do I want to spend more of my time? What kind of person do I want to be? What do I think and feel, and why?
- 5. Support.** You need trustworthy people in your life who are willing to help you. People you can turn to when the going gets tough. People who want the best for you. Make a list of people you can count on for help. Will you list your mom or dad? A brother or sister? Teachers? Friends? Coaches? Grandparents? Who else?

Finally, feel free to let me know what you think of the book when you're finished reading it. What was the most helpful, interesting, amusing, or encouraging? What insights would you add? You can write to me at:

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If you're online, you can email me: help4kids@freespirit.com

Or drop me a note at the Free Spirit Web site: www.freespirit.com



P.S. I love getting letters from readers, and I *always* answer them!

Chapter I

What It Means to Be Gifted

“Being gifted means that I am smarter than my cat.”

—Rudy, age 9

4 Fast Facts About GT

FACT #1: Gifted means different things to different people.

If you're not exactly sure what *gifted* means, you're in good company. There are hundreds of different definitions of giftedness. Even the experts sometimes disagree with each other about what it means and how to identify it in people. “Who cares what it means?” you might ask. The answer: *you* should care. Knowing who you are is essential to getting what you want out of life and being happy. It's hard to be happy if you're feeling unsure of yourself or always wondering why you are the way you are.

Here's how some people and organizations have defined *giftedness*. See if you agree or disagree with these definitions:

The *Random House Dictionary* says...

gift•ed adjective:

1. having great special talent or ability: the debut of a *gifted* artist
2. having exceptionally high intelligence: *gifted* children

The U.S. Department of Education says...

“Gifted learners are children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.”

Logophile

po-ten-tial noun: something that can develop or become actual

The National Association for Gifted Children says...

“Gifted students give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, and need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities.”

Professor Robert Sternberg says...

“Giftedness derives from unusual ability to deal with novel kinds of tasks and situations.”

Robert Sternberg has been a professor of psychology at both Yale and Tufts Universities. He believes that people with exceptional intelligence are especially good at clearly seeing and knowing how to adapt to their environments and also how to shape their environments to fit their needs.

Logophile

en-vi-ron-ment noun: the place or situation you are in

Dr. Barbara Clark says...

“Giftedness identifies a level of brain development that allows rapid, in-depth understanding of complex ideas and operations, which may lead to outstanding creativity and performance.”

Dr. Clark, a giftedness expert and former professor in Los Angeles, stresses the importance of a GT's interactions with his or her environment.

She says, “It is not possible for a brain to maintain its level of growth without help. It must constantly be challenged with new ideas, information, and experiences to continue to grow.”

Dr. Joseph Renzulli says...

“Gifted behavior occurs in certain people, at certain times, under certain circumstances.”

Dr. Renzulli is the director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. He considers three factors important for the development of gifted behavior: above-average ability, creativity, and commitment to tasks. He believes that when someone shows all three factors combined, the person is showing giftedness.

The Columbus Group says...

“Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm.”

The Columbus Group is a group of researchers who study giftedness. *Asynchronous development* basically means that your brain’s moving very fast while your feelings and social skills are trying to keep up. This does not mean you are lagging behind emotionally or socially. Quite the opposite, you probably are more emotionally mature than other kids your age. It’s just that thinking about complex issues and ideas might require a level of maturity far beyond your years.

Logophile

a-syn-chro-ny noun: the imbalance that exists when things occur at different times

Individual schools say...

“Giftedness means that you do much better in school, and in less time, than many other students.”


Some schools may define *gifted* by looking at levels of ability. For example, kids in the top 5 or 10 percent of their class in grade point average or achievement test scores may be those identified by the school as needing a more challenging curriculum.

Is your head spinning from all these descriptions of giftedness? Take a deep breath, because here’s even more to think about.

FACT #2: There are many different ways of being gifted.


Academic ability.

Although few gifted kids are equally good at everything, many are gifted in one or more academic areas such as math, reading, writing, social studies, spelling, or science.



ASK YOURSELF: What classes seem to come naturally when you put your mind to work on them? You also probably enjoy these subjects the most. It’s pretty difficult to be good at something you don’t like!

Creative thinking. Highly creative kids are good at thinking up unusual ways to solve problems. They may have wild and crazy ways of doing things. They may be clever and good at thinking up jokes. Creative people are different, and they like it that way! (Sometimes adults have a hard time



ASK YOURSELF: Have you ever come up with a way to do your math problems that’s faster than the way your teacher taught you? Are you sometimes able to get the right answers by solving the problems in your head? If so, when your teacher insists that you use the traditional problem-solving method and figure out the problems on paper, it might feel very frustrating and unnecessary to you.

accepting very creative kids, who often question why things are done the way they are. Creatively gifted people enjoy bending or breaking rules, and this can make some adults feel uneasy.)

Visual/Performing arts.

Talented performers are considered gifted in a special way. They express themselves best through art, dance, drama, creative writing, or music. They're often very imaginative and original, and they like to show their stuff.

ASK YOURSELF: Do you know anyone who fits this description? What's his or her special talent? Do you have a special talent?



Leadership. People with leadership ability are excellent decision makers. They like to take responsibility, and they have high expectations for themselves and others. They're often popular, self-confident, and good at motivating people.

ASK YOURSELF: Are you the kind of person who is organized and likes to inspire people to get things done?



General intellectual ability. Kids with this kind of giftedness are smart in many ways. They get excited about new ideas, learn quickly, usually have a large vocabulary, ask a lot of questions, and enjoy abstract, complex thinking.

ASK YOURSELF: Are you a superfast learner? Do kids ever think you're a show-off or a snob because you use big words? Do you know a lot about many different things? Do you often start projects on your own?



Psychomotor ability.

These kids have outstanding control of their motor (physical) abilities. They move their bodies with grace and coordination, perform intricate tasks with their hands, are good at navigating, and often show exceptional strength, speed, balance, and flexibility.



ASK YOURSELF: Do you love gym class? Do you learn new sports easily? Is being physically fit and strong appealing to you? Do you like dancing or gymnastics? Do you love to build things or do crafts? Do people always want you on their sports team?

FACT #3: Giftedness means different things in different cultures.

You might be considered gifted where you live because your abilities are valued and needed there. But imagine you are plopped into the middle of a jungle without any camping gear, fresh water, or matches. Would you have what it takes to survive *there*? An ability or trait that's valued in one part of the world may not mean much in another part. So, the criteria for giftedness vary from place to place, depending on what people value.

Now, you may *really* be confused. It's mind-boggling to think about the different ways people can be gifted—and I haven't even listed all the ways. You might feel frustrated trying to figure it all out. But keep in mind, there are no right or wrong answers to the question "What does *gifted* mean?" There are just different ways of talking and thinking about giftedness.

FACT #4: Most people DO agree about one thing when it comes to giftedness.

When you're gifted, you have high potential. When you have high potential, your brain, body, and spirit have the power to help you achieve great things *if you try*.

At some point in your life, your teachers or a parent might have said, "You're not working up to your potential." But what if you're doing all of your schoolwork, even finishing early? *And* you're getting good grades? *And* you're not goofing off in class?

GTS Sound Off!



What does *gifted* mean to you?

"To me it means I am the odd one out." —*Marisol, age 10*

"It means I never stop asking questions!"

—*Devorah, age 9*

"I think it means I have a good chance of going far in life."

—*Inga, age 10*

"It means not just knowing the answer, but thinking about why it's that way."

—*Max, age 10*

"People expect more from me."

—*Duncan, age 9*

"It means I'm smart enough to learn what Albert Einstein knew."

—*Anthony, age 10*

"It means I have a special gift that came when I was born." —*Samir, age 7*

"It means I need to use my intelligence to help others and make the world a better place."

—*Claire, age 9*

"It just means I have a faster rate of computing things in my brain." —*Nori, age 8*

"I am an independent thinker."

—*Adriana, age 10*

"Being able to see things in a way others can't." —*Lexi, age 9*

What on earth are they talking about?!

The answer is: They know you're capable of more. Much more. You can go far beyond the regular schoolwork—or even the GT program—if *you try*. It's up to adults to give you opportunities, but it's up to you to take them, and to ask for them.

Maybe you've heard the old saying, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." If your teachers challenge you or your parent encourages you to explore new things—say "Yes!" (Unless you're already too busy to even take a drink of water, but that's another topic. See pages 93–94.)

You could be the smartest person in the world, but if you don't choose to use your high potential, you might as well have a brain the size of a toad (not that I have anything against toads).

"It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

—Professor Albus Dumbledore, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*



Create Your Own Definition

What do *you* think *gifted* means? This might be a great thing to write about in your GT Journal.

G v. T

Is there a difference between being *gifted* and being *talented*?

The short answer is: Not really.

The long answer is: Traditionally, educators have used the terms to

describe different things: *gifted* referred to high academic abilities, while *talented* meant superior abilities in the visual or performing arts. Even today, some school districts have separate programs for kids gifted in

"I don't especially like the label 'gifted' because I think it sounds kind of bland and isn't very specific. I prefer 'talented.'" —Zach, age 10

academics or in the arts. But current research shows that academically gifted students are often equally gifted in the arts, and vice versa.

For example, it's unlikely that you'd be super good at math without also having at least *some* exceptional ability in music, visual arts, drama, dance, or sports if you're given opportunities to develop it. That's a pretty good deal, huh? The only hitch is that some researchers claim artistic and physical talent can be easily "turned off" with lack of use. (Academic giftedness can be turned off, too, but not as quickly.) So keep up with that soccer practice and piano rehearsal!

The Many Sides of Intelligence

Gifted . . . talented . . . and wait, there's even more to the story! Why not dig even deeper to try to define *intelligence* itself? That's what Dr. Howard Gardner, a professor of psychology at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has been doing for many years. His theory is called *multiple intelligences*. It suggests that the human brain contains at least eight different kinds of intelligence.* These include:

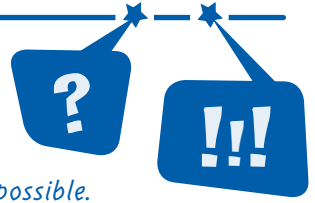
1. Verbal-linguistic intelligence (word smarts)
2. Logical-mathematical intelligence (number smarts)
3. Visual-spatial intelligence (picture smarts)
4. Musical-rhythmic intelligence (music smarts)
5. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (body smarts)
6. Interpersonal intelligence (people smarts)
7. Intrapersonal intelligence (self smarts)
8. Naturalist intelligence (nature smarts)

Every person—gifted or not—possesses all eight intelligences, and is usually strong in some and not-so-strong in others. Dr. Gardner's ideas have made many people think about how kids learn, and how teachers should teach.

*A ninth intelligence has been tentatively identified by Dr. Gardner. It is the existentialist intelligence and is strong in people who are good at placing things they learn into the vast picture of human existence. They ask big questions like "Why do I exist?" and "How do I think?" These people often pursue careers in philosophy, theology, or science.

WHIZ QUIZ:

What Are Your Strong Smarts?



Answer the following yes/no questions as honestly as possible.

Write your answers on a sheet of paper or in your journal.

1. I constantly have a song running through my head.
2. I am almost always reading something (book, magazine, Web site, cereal box, etc.).
3. I am drawn to bright colors and interesting designs.
4. I am good at crosswords, Scrabble, cryptograms, and other word games.
5. I am good at expressing my deepest feelings.
6. I can usually find my way around a new place pretty easily.
7. I can often sense the moods and feelings of others.
8. I enjoy solving difficult problems, especially with numbers (e.g., Sudoku).
9. I have pets and/or plants, and I like taking care of them.
10. I hear melodies and rhythms in the sounds around me.
11. I know my own strengths and weaknesses.
12. I learn best by doing things myself rather than watching others.
13. I like to examine and understand living things.
14. I make graphs, charts, and tables to explain things.
15. I enjoy telling and/or writing stories.
16. I like to work on group projects.
17. I love working on crafts and making things with my hands.
18. I try to be outside as much as possible.
19. I doodle when I'm listening in class or when I'm bored.