

Gifted Testing and Assessment

Testing and Assessment for the Gifted Child

When a parent [suspects their child is gifted](#) or sees [gifted characteristics](#) in their child, there are many follow-up questions and concerns around the gifted identification process. Some parents may need to pause for a while until they decide if gifted testing or assessment is right for them. Some may be ready for the process, but not sure where to begin – the Stanford Bin-what??

It may be confusing for parents, even parents who went through their own version of gifted identification, to make heads or tails of which evaluations do what. Parents may assume that yearly school testing covers gifted identification; after all, what are all those tests for? However, because there are no national policies outlining gifted education practices, identification is highly dependent on the state, school district, and the local school.

What is gifted testing?

Gifted testing is often done to determine if a child is intellectually gifted. Most parents seek gifted identification for their child in order to gain entry to certain gifted programs or services. Some schools that offer gifted curriculum will use testing as a measurement tool to qualify students who score above a certain threshold. Depending on where you live and what gifted education policies are in place, your school district may screen entire grades of students early on or administer IQ tests on an individual basis if the child appears to perform above their grade level.

If you are interested in seeking gifted identification, read our guide on [How to Get Your Child Tested for Giftedness](#) or use our [Gifted Testers Map](#) to find a professional for your child.

What is the difference between gifted testing and assessment?

The terms gifted testing and assessment often used interchangeably but they are not the same. Being able to articulate the difference will help determine which option best fits your goals, as well as aid in finding a licensed professional who can address your questions.

Gifted Testing

Gifted testing involves the administration of a standardized test in a specific format, often defined by the publisher of the test, to ensure the test is given to every person in a consistent manner. This may include the way in which questions are presented, the exact wording a tester must use, specific time limits, or a discontinuation point at which

the student can no longer answer questions correctly and must move to the next section.

Gifted Assessment

Gifted assessment, on the other hand, is much more comprehensive – and for that reason, can be much more costly. In an assessment, you will work with a trained professional who will use their expertise to determine what information needs to be gathered and the most appropriate tools for collecting that information, observe the child while collecting this information, and then provide an interpretation of their findings to establish the child's complete learning profile. This professional will likely provide detailed information on the child's strengths, challenges, learning style, educational needs, and individual characteristics, and recommendations for meeting the child's needs.

Testing is one of many tools utilized in an assessment and may include both quantitative and qualitative measurements. The quantitative measures can include intelligence testing, which evaluates a child's cognitive abilities, and achievement testing, which evaluates a child's knowledge. Comparing the results of both tests may reveal discrepancies between a child's ability and current level of performance. A child may also undergo other testing that evaluates attention, executive functioning, behavior or other areas. If a physiological condition is suspected, a child's vision, hearing, speech or motor skills may be assessed.

Qualitative measures include classroom observations, surveys completed by teachers and/or parents, interviews with the child or the review of a child's educational record and portfolio, or the child's responses during the test administration. This qualitative data may provide the assessing professional a better context in which to interpret a child's assessment results.

In the final step of an assessment, parents should be provided with a clear summary of the findings, sometimes referred to as an evaluation, as initially agreed upon with the professional. Parents will typically receive a detailed report summarizing the following, discussed in a wrap-up meeting with the professional:

- quantitative tests administered with scores and percentiles;
- qualitative information gathered;
- detailed interpretation of all information collected, including whether the tester believes the test results are valid;
- and recommendations for parents and educators.

Clearly, assessment goes much further than testing and is more reliant upon the tester's expertise, experience, and knowledge to interpret the child's responses and decide how best to move forward. This is especially true when testing students who are extremely bright and exhibit characteristics that can impact test scores, such as the student inferring additional meaning into a question that delays their response time or demonstrating perfectionistic tendencies. A knowledgeable tester will be able to utilize these characteristics to provide a complete picture of the child's abilities.

Types of gifted tests

The two main categories for gifted identification are achievement tests and abilities tests.

Achievement Tests

Achievement tests look for a child's knowledge in a subject area. They may be group-administered, like the SAT and ACT, or they might be administered individually by a trained professional, like the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement. Group-administered achievement tests are often standardized and the results provide a numerical score. Individually administered achievement tests done by a professional are often part of a larger gifted assessment whose results cover the child's learning profile in more depth. Achievement tests can be used as gifted testing to screen students for particular areas of academic strength.

Abilities Tests

Abilities tests evaluate a child's cognitive abilities or intelligence quotient (IQ). These are delivered individually by a trained professional, often someone with an advanced degree in education, psychology, or social work. The results are numerical and descriptive since it often includes the professional's observations of the child, interpretation of the results, and recommendations. Abilities tests can be used for gifted assessment, which provides a more in-depth learning profile of the child. Commonly used abilities tests include:

Individual Tests:

- Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI-2)
- Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Scale (UNIT-2)
- Stanford-Binet 5th edition (SB-5)
- Wechsler Preschool Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI-IV)
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-V)
- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities (WJ-IV Cog)

Nonverbal Tests:

- Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT-3)
- Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI-2)
- Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Scale (UNIT-2)
- Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT 8)

Group Tests

- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
- Differential Ability Scales (DAS-2)