

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