

8 Great Ways to Make Regular School More Cool*

1. **Talk with your teacher about working ahead in class.** In their regular classes, many GTs have told me that a big issue is whether or not their teacher allows them to work ahead in the lesson, either in class when they finish their work early, or outside of class. If you'd like to work ahead, but your teacher won't allow it, try talking to him or her. Explain how you feel, and see if there might be room to compromise.
2. **Ask about skipping over work you already know.** This will free up time for more challenging projects. *Example:* Some kids take a pretest at the start of a spelling unit. If they score well on the pretest, say 95 percent or more correct, they don't have to work on learning the words for that unit, because their pretest score shows they already know them. You can apply this idea to other subjects, too.
3. **Become an expert on your favorite topics.** Talk with your teachers about working independently. This is a great way to study subjects in more depth than most regular classes allow. By working on your own thing, at your own speed, there's no limit to what you can learn. Ask your teacher or a parent to help you plan your study. Keep in mind that working independently doesn't necessarily mean working alone. GTs need help from others in learning the how-tos of independent study. Here are some questions to help guide you in creating an effective plan to present to your teacher:
 - ★ *What will you study and how?* Be as specific as possible.
 - ★ *Who can help you besides your teacher?* A librarian? Parent? A relative who is knowledgeable about your topic? Someone from your community?
 - ★ *How long will your study take?*

*Talk with your mom or dad and ask for support. Tell her or him what's happening in school, and what's not happening for you. Share these eight ideas with your parent and see if she or he is willing to back you up.

- ★ *How will you show what you've learned?* Talk with your teachers about creating unique displays for your classroom or school. You could work on them alone or with other students. You might design a new display each month, and take responsibility for putting it up and taking it down. Here are two examples of displays produced by GTs I've talked to:

Inventions display: Innovative GTs at one school participated in an inventors' fair and made a display to coincide with the event. They presented information about famous inventors and also about their own inventions.

Collections display: Collections make great displays, and most GTs I've known have created at least one. (The most unusual? One kid collected hundreds of different sugar packets from restaurants around the country!) Each display usually includes a brief description of the collection and information about how the collector became involved in the project.

ASK YOURSELF: If you could start a collection, what would you collect? How would you display your collection? What information would you provide about it?



- 4. Talk with the teachers in your school who specialize in certain subjects**—those who teach art, music, dance, drama, creative writing, computers, and other subjects. Would they be willing to accept your help in planning activities and events or even lesson units? Could you be a computer aid, a tutor, or a cable TV operator? Volunteer to help them in creative and productive ways. Media centers and specialized teachers will likely welcome your skills and enthusiasm.
- 5. Talk with your teachers and principal about starting mini-classes for subjects not taught in your school.** *Example:* If you'd like to learn a particular foreign language other than those offered,

such as Italian, find a few other students who share your interest. Tell your teachers and your principal about your idea. Ask them to help you figure out how, when, and where your Italian class could meet. They might also be able to help you find a tutor to guide the class. Borrow Italian language books and CD-ROMS or DVDs from the media center and you're on your way. *E' una buona idea!*

6. Start a journal or blog. Write your thoughts, poetry, stories, doodles, new ideas, or other creative jottings in a journal. Or, start a blog (short for "Web log"), which is like a journal, only it's published online. Post your musings whenever and about whatever you choose. You could blog about your favorite topics, pets, projects, and current events. Some people even blog about their daily breakfast cereals! See page 80 for a list of kid-friendly Web sites where you can create your own blog.

Important!

While blog sites for kids have strict safety measures in place to protect your privacy, your blog may still be visited by many people. So take care to post respectful content.

7. Ask your teachers if you can demonstrate what you learn in new and unusual ways. Instead of writing a report, how about one of these options?

- ★ Build a diorama (a 3-D miniature exhibit)
- ★ Write a play or short story
- ★ Prepare a speech
- ★ Compose a song or rap
- ★ Create a slide show or photo essay
- ★ Design a Web page
- ★ Construct a mobile
- ★ Record a video or podcast
- ★ What's your idea?

- 8. Use your powers of persuasion to convince your teachers that you need an “anytime-of-the-day” library and media center pass.** Be a regular customer of your library and media center and learn as much as you can there—from books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, newspapers, magazines, reports, Web sites, podcasts, CDs, CD-ROMS, DVDs, computer programs, and anything else you can find. While teachers try to do their best, they’re not going to be able to teach you everything you want to know.

“The next best thing to knowing something is knowing where to find it.” —*Samuel Johnson, 18th-century British author*

Find Other GTs & Take Action!

Have you heard other gifted kids complain about boredom, assignments, or tests? I bet you have. So don’t just sit there—join together with these kids and brainstorm ways you can take action to change things. When brainstorming, remember these four rules:

1. Generate as many ideas as possible.
2. Do not criticize any ideas.
3. Do not discuss ideas until you are through brainstorming.
4. Welcome unusual ideas, no matter how many or outrageous!

