

Understanding developmental stages can help you support your child's learning at home and in school.

All children go through developmental stages as they grow up ■ Just as children's height, weight, and physical abilities change, so do things such as their desire to play alone or with a group, how they learn best, or how talkative they are.

These stages of development are fairly predictable in children within any given culture* ■ With each stage come certain predictable changes in how children relate to others and approach the world.

Children go through these stages at different rates ■ Although there are general characteristics at each developmental stage in any given culture, how quickly a child goes through these stages depends on many things, including the child's personality and environment. It's common and normal for some children to arrive at a developmental stage a bit later or earlier—sometimes a year later or earlier—than their peers. Also, a child might mature quickly in one area, such as physical development, but more slowly in another, such as social development.

Children don't change suddenly on their birthday ■ For example, a child who just turned nine may still show a lot of eight-year-old behaviors, and a child who's nine-and-a-half may already be showing a lot of ten-year-old behaviors.

ENJOY YOUR CHILD AT EACH AGE.

Each age is unique. Each is a wonder.

*The characteristics in this pamphlet are based on research on children in European and U.S. schools. Children growing up in other cultures may show different developmental patterns.

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Additional resources about child development and children's success in school

BOOKS

- Faber, Adele, and Elaine Mazlish. 1995. *How to Talk So Kids Can Learn at Home and in School*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Fox, Jennifer. 2008. *Your Child's Strengths: Discover Them, Develop Them, Use Them*. New York: Viking.
- Nelsen, Jane. Numerous books published about her "Positive Discipline" approach. For full list, descriptions, and other resources, see www.positivediscipline.com.
- Wolf, Anthony. 2000. *The Secret of Parenting: How to Be in Charge of Today's Kids—from Toddlers to Preteens—Without Threats or Punishment*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Wood, Chip. 2007. *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4–14*. Turners Falls, MA: Center for Responsive Schools, Inc.

WEBSITES

- Child Development Institute**
www.childdevelopmentinfo.com
Offers information on child development, parenting, and other topics of interest
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning**
www.casel.org
Includes a section on how parents can support their children's social and emotional learning at home
- National PTA**
www.pta.org
Tips and articles on topics related to parenting and school-home collaboration
- PBS Parents**
www.pbs.org/parents/
Tips and information on a variety of topics, including child development and how to support your child's learning and work in school

Child Development Pamphlets are available for grades K through 8.

To order pamphlets, Yardsticks, or other resources, call

800-360-6332 ext. 125 or visit

www.responsiveclassroom.org.



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CHILD DEVELOPMENT PAMPHLET SERIES



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Fourth GRADE

Common developmental characteristics of 8-, 9-, and 10-year-olds



Children in the Classroom Ages 4–14

by Chip Wood ■ Published by Center for Responsive Schools, Inc.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF Eight-Year-Olds

Enthusiastic and imaginative, eights often love big challenges but lack the work skills and patience to complete their plans.

Children this age need adult help to know their limits and work through the steps to their goal.

SOCIAL

- Love group activities and cooperative work
- Prefer playing with peers of the same gender
- Like to talk and explain ideas
- Good sense of humor
- Adjust well to change; bounce back quickly from mistakes or disappointments

PHYSICAL

- Full of energy; play hard, work quickly, and tire easily—do better with several short play breaks than one long one
- Eyes able to focus well on objects near and far
- May have growth spurt
- Limited attention span; short exercise breaks help concentration
- Better control of eyes and hands allows copying from board or chart

COGNITIVE

- Industrious, impatient, and full of ideas; often take on more than they can handle
- Listen well but may not always remember what they've heard
- Getting good at handwriting, handcrafts, and drawing
- Excited but also nervous about exploring the broader world
- May give up when things are hard but soon want to try again
- Interested in rules, logic, and fairness

SOCIAL

- Very competitive, yet may form cliques
- Complain a lot; criticize self and others (including adults)
- Often say "I hate it," "I can't," "It's boring," etc.
- Like to work with same-gender partner
- Can work in groups but with lots of arguing
- Enjoy exaggeration and "dirty" jokes
- Need adults to be patient and explain clearly
- Need adult lightheartedness, humor, and encouragement to lighten their mood and relieve anxiety

PHYSICAL

- Coordination is better; boys love to rough-house
- Like to push physical limits; get tired easily
- Complain about aches, pains, and injuries
- Restless; can't sit still for long
- May bite nails or twist hair to relieve tension

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF Nine-Year-Olds

The enthusiasm of eight often turns into brooding and worrying at nine. Nines tend to be critical of the world around them—nothing seems fair to a nine-year-old. But nine can also be a time of budding intellectual curiosity. Children this age look hard for explanations of how things work and why things happen as they do.

SOCIAL

COGNITIVE

- Worry about world events, parents' health, friends, school, etc.
- Work hard and pay attention to detail, but may jump quickly between interests
- Less imaginative than at eight years old
- Want factual explanations; enjoy scientific exploration
- Have trouble understanding abstractions such as large numbers, long periods of time, and vast areas of space
- Love language and word play
- Begin to see the bigger world, including issues of justice and fairness
- Enjoy "interest" clubs such as arts and crafts, chess, and sports

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF Ten-Year-Olds

Ten-year-olds are generally happy and relaxed, enjoying themselves and their peers, parents, even siblings. Proud of all they have accomplished, they like to share their knowledge with others.

Tens usually do well with group projects because they tend to be calm and naturally cooperative.

SOCIAL

- Good age for clubs, team sports, and whole-class activities
- Eager to reach out to others, such as through community service or tutoring younger children
- Boys and girls work well together
- Quick to anger and quick to forgive
- Competitive but also cooperative
- Listen well but also enjoy talking and explaining
- Enjoy adult recognition

PHYSICAL

- Muscles for jumping, running and other big movements are developing quickly
- Need lots of outdoor play and physical challenges
- Snacks and rest periods help rapidly growing bodies
- Better at small muscle movements; enjoy precision tasks such as tracing and copying
- Ready to start using tools such as compasses, rulers, and templates

COGNITIVE

- Very good at memorizing facts
- Enjoy collecting, organizing, and classifying
- Like rules and logic; open to learning about scientific principles, governmental structures, and meeting formats
- Can concentrate on reading and thinking for long periods
- Hardworking; take pride in schoolwork
- Enjoy choral reading, poetry, plays, and singing
- Open to learning mediation or problem-solving skills