# Common Developmental Traits: 4–12 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Developmental Trait</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check in with adults frequently; need advice and modeling of appropriate behavior</td>
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<td>Seek attachment and approval; want to “do it right”</td>
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<td>Very talkative; love new ideas and asking questions</td>
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<td>Critical of self and others; need encouragement</td>
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# Common Developmental Traits by Age

(Adapted from *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4–14*, 3rd edition, by Chip Wood, CRS, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Language/Cognitive</th>
<th>Social/Emotional</th>
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| 4   | Fine motor skills poorly developed  
Visual focus on distant objects  
Need physical activity | Learn through exploratory play and activities that call on large muscles  
Love being read to  
Enjoy language and delight in playing with words  
Short attention span for paper/pencil tasks | Friendly and talkative  
Check in with adults frequently; need advice/modeling of appropriate behavior  
Enjoy being with friends but often engage in parallel play  
Love having “jobs” such as counting, attendance, snack helper |
| 5   | Still awkward with small motor activities  
Able to see close objects best  
Need physical activity | See one way to do things  
Imaginative; don’t always distinguish real from imaginary  
Literal—raining cats and dogs means animals falling from sky  
Learn through direct experience  
Concise; use few words in response to questions  
Concrete, sequential problem-solving  
Think out loud before acting | Seek attachment and approval; want to “do it right”  
Later in year might test adult authority  
Appreciate boundaries  
Good at partner and solo work |
| 6   | Energetic  
In a hurry  
Rapid growth  
Noisy and active  
Tire easily | Very talkative; love new ideas/asking questions  
Love “work” but sometimes take on too much  
Begin to conceptualize past/present and cause/effect | Enthusiastic, energetic, competitive  
Rush to be first or dawdle to be last  
Seek friends  
 Easily upset when criticized or discouraged  
Challenge boundaries and authority  
Work well in small groups |
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| 7   | Often keep eyes focused on small, close area  
    Writing is very small  
    Can do quiet work for long periods  
    Increased physical coordination | Good at classifying, for example tasks that involve sorting  
    Learn new words quickly; enjoy writing stories  
    Listen well; speak precisely  
    Value accuracy and completion  
    Enjoy hands-on exploration | Need rules, routines, physical boundaries  
    May be moody or touchy  
    Seek relationships and form close friendships; may change friendships quickly  
    Rely on adults for help and reassurance  
    Work well alone and in pairs  
    Dislike taking risks or making mistakes |
| 8   | Increased small and large motor coordination  
    Energetic; play hard, work quickly, tire easily  
    Able to focus on near and far  
    May have growth spurt | Industrious, impatient, and full of ideas; often take on more than they can handle  
    Enjoy exploration but can be nervous about the world  
    Enjoy humor | Adjust well to change; bounce back from disappointments  
    Like to talk and explain ideas  
    Like to work in groups  
    Prefer playing with same-gender peers  
    Concerned with fairness/justice |
| 9   | Improved coordination  
    Like to push physical limits; tire easily  
    Restless; can’t sit still for long  
    Often report aches and pains | Work hard and pay attention but may jump quickly between interests  
    Want factual explanations; enjoy scientific exploration  
    Difficulty with abstractions such as large numbers  
    Very verbal; love language and word play  
    Industrious and curious  
    Worry about global issues | Competitive; may form cliques  
    Critical of self and others; need encouragement  
    Like to work with a partner of their choice; can work in groups but with lots of arguing  
    Seek answers to big questions  
    Anxious |
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| 10  | Signs of puberty begin for girls ahead of boys  
Muscles needed for big movements are developing quickly  
Need lots of outdoor play and physical challenges  
Enjoy precision tasks  
Benefit from snack and rest periods | Peer focused  
Descriptive  
Seek definitions  
Playful  
Gain identity through the group  
Enjoy categorizing and classifying  
Good at memorizing  
Like rules and logic  
Can concentrate on reading and thinking for long periods  
Enjoy choral reading, poetry, plays, singing | Contributing member of group; eager to reach out to others  
Quick to anger; quick to forgive  
Hardworking; take pride in schoolwork  
Open to learning mediation or problem-solving skills  
Listen well and enjoy talking and explaining  
Developing more mature sense of right and wrong |
| 11  | Restless, very energetic  
Need lots of food, physical activity, sleep  
Growth spurts | Like “adult” tasks, such as researching  
Enjoy brain teasers and puzzles  
Want to learn new things more than review previous work  
Challenge assumptions—their own and those of adults  
Able to think abstractly and understand ideas | Common age for cliques and pairs  
Peer focused; need to save face with peers  
Moody; self-absorbed  
Sensitive about changing bodies  
Like to challenge rules, test limits |
| 12  | Need lots of food, physical activity, sleep  
Growth spurts | May begin to excel at a subject or skill  
More sophisticated sense of humor  
Enthusiastic about purposeful schoolwork; can set goals and concentrate  
Interested in civics, social justice | Peers more important than adults  
Question and argue with adults  
Like both group and individual work  
Need rituals to mark turning points  
Can be self-aware, insightful, empathic  
Can take on major responsibilities |
# Developmentally Responsive Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-year-olds</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>6-year-olds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-year-olds</td>
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## Developmentally Responsive Classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K:</td>
<td>4- to 5-year-olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten:</td>
<td>5- to 6-year-olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st grade:</td>
<td>6- to 7-year-olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade:</td>
<td>7- to 8-year-olds</td>
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