

Common Developmental Traits: 4–12 years

Age	Developmental Trait
	Check in with adults frequently; need advice and modeling of appropriate behavior
	Seek attachment and approval; want to “do it right”
	Very talkative; love new ideas and asking questions
	Dislike taking risks or making mistakes
	Industrious, impatient, and full of ideas; often take on more than they can handle
	Critical of self and others; need encouragement
	Benefit from snack and rest periods
	Restless, very energetic
	Need rituals to mark turning points

Common Developmental Traits by Age

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

Age	Physical	Language/Cognitive	Social/Emotional
4	<p>Fine motor skills poorly developed</p> <p>Visual focus on distant objects</p> <p>Need physical activity</p>	<p>Learn through exploratory play and activities that call on large muscles</p> <p>Love being read to</p> <p>Enjoy language and delight in playing with words</p> <p>Short attention span for paper/pencil tasks</p>	<p>Friendly and talkative</p> <p>Check in with adults frequently; need advice/modeling of appropriate behavior</p> <p>Enjoy being with friends but often engage in parallel play</p> <p>Love having “jobs” such as counting, attendance, snack helper</p>
5	<p>Still awkward with small motor activities</p> <p>Able to see close objects best</p> <p>Need physical activity</p>	<p>See one way to do things</p> <p>Imaginative; don’t always distinguish real from imaginary</p> <p>Literal—raining cats and dogs means animals falling from sky</p> <p>Learn through direct experience</p> <p>Concise; use few words in response to questions</p> <p>Concrete, sequential problem-solving</p> <p>Think out loud before acting</p>	<p>Seek attachment and approval; want to “do it right”</p> <p>Later in year might test adult authority</p> <p>Appreciate boundaries</p> <p>Good at partner and solo work</p>
6	<p>Energetic</p> <p>In a hurry</p> <p>Rapid growth</p> <p>Noisy and active</p> <p>Tire easily</p>	<p>Very talkative; love new ideas/asking questions</p> <p>Love “work” but sometimes take on too much</p> <p>Begin to conceptualize past/present and cause/effect</p>	<p>Enthusiastic, energetic, competitive</p> <p>Rush to be first or dawdle to be last</p> <p>Seek friends</p> <p>Easily upset when criticized or discouraged</p> <p>Challenge boundaries and authority</p> <p>Work well in small groups</p>

Age	Physical	Language/Cognitive	Social/Emotional
7	<p>Often keep eyes focused on small, close area</p> <p>Writing is very small</p> <p>Can do quiet work for long periods</p> <p>Increased physical coordination</p>	<p>Good at classifying, for example tasks that involve sorting</p> <p>Learn new words quickly; enjoy writing stories</p> <p>Listen well; speak precisely</p> <p>Value accuracy and completion</p> <p>Enjoy hands-on exploration</p>	<p>Need rules, routines, physical boundaries</p> <p>May be moody or touchy</p> <p>Seek relationships and form close friendships; may change friendships quickly</p> <p>Rely on adults for help and reassurance</p> <p>Work well alone and in pairs</p> <p>Dislike taking risks or making mistakes</p>
8	<p>Increased small and large motor coordination</p> <p>Energetic; play hard, work quickly, tire easily</p> <p>Able to focus on near and far</p> <p>May have growth spurt</p>	<p>Industrious, impatient, and full of ideas; often take on more than they can handle</p> <p>Enjoy exploration but can be nervous about the world</p> <p>Enjoy humor</p>	<p>Adjust well to change; bounce back from disappointments</p> <p>Like to talk and explain ideas</p> <p>Like to work in groups</p> <p>Prefer playing with same-gender peers</p> <p>Concerned with fairness/justice</p>
9	<p>Improved coordination</p> <p>Like to push physical limits; tire easily</p> <p>Restless; can't sit still for long</p> <p>Often report aches and pains</p>	<p>Work hard and pay attention but may jump quickly between interests</p> <p>Want factual explanations; enjoy scientific exploration</p> <p>Difficulty with abstractions such as large numbers</p> <p>Very verbal; love language and word play</p> <p>Industrious and curious</p> <p>Worry about global issues</p>	<p>Competitive; may form cliques</p> <p>Critical of self and others; need encouragement</p> <p>Like to work with a partner of their choice; can work in groups but with lots of arguing</p> <p>Seek answers to big questions</p> <p>Anxious</p>

Age	Physical	Language/Cognitive	Social/Emotional
10	<p>Signs of puberty begin for girls ahead of boys</p> <p>Muscles needed for big movements are developing quickly</p> <p>Need lots of outdoor play and physical challenges</p> <p>Enjoy precision tasks</p> <p>Benefit from snack and rest periods</p>	<p>Peer focused</p> <p>Descriptive</p> <p>Seek definitions</p> <p>Playful</p> <p>Gain identity through the group</p> <p>Enjoy categorizing and classifying</p> <p>Good at memorizing</p> <p>Like rules and logic</p> <p>Can concentrate on reading and thinking for long periods</p> <p>Enjoy choral reading, poetry, plays, singing</p>	<p>Contributing member of group; eager to reach out to others</p> <p>Quick to anger; quick to forgive</p> <p>Hardworking; take pride in schoolwork</p> <p>Open to learning mediation or problem-solving skills</p> <p>Listen well and enjoy talking and explaining</p> <p>Developing more mature sense of right and wrong</p>
11	<p>Restless, very energetic</p> <p>Need lots of food, physical activity, sleep</p> <p>Growth spurts</p>	<p>Like “adult” tasks, such as re-searching</p> <p>Enjoy brain teasers and puzzles</p> <p>Want to learn new things more than review previous work</p> <p>Challenge assumptions—their own and those of adults</p> <p>Able to think abstractly and understand ideas</p>	<p>Common age for cliques and pairs</p> <p>Peer focused; need to save face with peers</p> <p>Moody; self-absorbed</p> <p>Sensitive about changing bodies</p> <p>Like to challenge rules, test limits</p>
12	<p>Need lots of food, physical activity, sleep</p> <p>Growth spurts</p>	<p>May begin to excel at a subject or skill</p> <p>More sophisticated sense of humor</p> <p>Enthusiastic about purposeful schoolwork; can set goals and concentrate</p> <p>Interested in civics, social justice</p>	<p>Peers more important than adults</p> <p>Question and argue with adults</p> <p>Like both group and individual work</p> <p>Need rituals to mark turning points</p> <p>Can be self-aware, insightful, empathic</p> <p>Can take on major responsibilities</p>

Developmentally Responsive Teachers

4-year-olds	5-year-olds	6-year-olds
7-year-olds	8-year-olds	9-year-olds
10-year-olds	11-year-olds	12-year-olds

Developmentally Responsive Classrooms

Pre-K: 4- to 5-year-olds	
Kindergarten: 5- to 6-year-olds	
1st grade: 6- to 7-year-olds	
2nd grade: 7- to 8-year-olds	
3rd grade: 8- to 9-year-olds	
4th grade: 9- to 10-year-olds	
5th grade: 10- to 11-year-olds	
6th grade: 11- to 12-year-olds	