

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 eleven may still show a lot of ten-year-old behaviors, and a child who's eleven-and-a-half may already be showing a lot of twelve-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.

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

BOOKS

Comer, James P., and Alvin F. Poussaint. 1992. *Raising Black Children*. New York: Plume Books.

Faber, Adele, and Elaine Mazlish. 1995. *How to Talk So Kids Can Learn*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Konner, Melvin. 1991. *Childhood: A Multicultural View*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

Nelsen, Jane. 1996. *Positive Discipline*. New York: Random House.

Rogoff, Barbara. 2003. *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*. Reprint Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wood, Chip. 1997. *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4–14*. Turners Falls, Mass.: Northeast Foundation for Children.

WEBSITES

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
www.casel.org

Easy-to-use information, with a section on how parents can support their children's social and emotional learning at home

National PTA®
www.pta.org

Tips, fact sheets, and articles on a wide range of topics related to parenting and school-home collaboration

School Success Info.org
www.schoolsuccessinfo.org

Highly practical tips on how to support children's school learning at home

TRIFOLD PAMPHLET
WEB SAMPLE
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ACTUAL SIZE 17" X 11"

The content of this pamphlet was adapted from the book *Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4–14*.

Published by Northeast Foundation for Children, the book goes into more detail about the common characteristics of children at each age and implications for classroom curriculum.

Pamphlets are available for grades K through 8.
Pamphlets for each grade can be purchased in packets of 30.
To order *Yardsticks* or pamphlets, please call 800-360-6332 or order online at www.responsiveclassroom.org.

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NEFC ITEM NO. CC6



Sixth GRADE

Common developmental characteristics of 10, 11, and 12 year-olds

ADAPTED FROM

YARDSTICKS

Children in the Classroom Ages 4–14

by Chip Wood • Published by Northeast Foundation for Children

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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.

S O C I A L

- 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

P H Y S I C A L

- 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

C O G N I T I V E

- 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 school work
- Enjoy choral reading, poetry, plays, and singing
- Open to learning mediation or problem-solving skills

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF Eleven-Year-Olds

Elevens are going through huge changes in their bodies, minds, and social behavior as they begin adolescence. The easy friendliness of ten often gives way to awkward, sometimes rude behavior at eleven. With their growing capacity for higher thinking, children this age like to try work that feels grown up, such as researching and interviewing.

S O C I A L

- Moody, self-absorbed
- Easily embarrassed; need to “save face” in front of peers
- Sensitive about their changing bodies
- Need lots of time to talk with peers
- Common age for girls to form cliques
- Worry about who’s “in” and who’s “out”
- Like to challenge rules, argue, and test limits
- Need adult empathy, humor, and light attitude to help them take things less seriously

P H Y S I C A L

- Restless and very energetic
- Need lots of food, physical activity, and sleep
- Growth spurt for many girls; some begin menstruating
- “Growing pains” (bone outgrowing muscle) may cause nightly aches and daily complaints
- More colds, ear infections, flu, etc.

C O G N I T I V E

- Can think abstractly—for example, more able to understand ideas such as “justice”
- Beginning to challenge adult explanations and their own assumptions
- Would rather learn new skills than review or improve previous work
- Enjoy using their developing thinking skills to do brain teasers and puzzles
- Like “adult” tasks (researching, interviewing, footnoting, etc.) and “adult” studies (history, biography, etc.), though may outwardly fuss while secretly enjoying the work

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF Twelve-Year-Olds

Twelves are often unpredictable and hard to read as they swing between childhood and adulthood. Their greatest need is to be with peers as they sort through their physical, social, and emotional challenges and the all-important identity question, “Who am I?”

S O C I A L

- Peer opinions matter more than those of teachers and parents
- Question and argue with adults about rules; need adults to listen to their ideas
- More willing to accept guidance from adults other than teachers and parents
- Need ceremonies and rituals to mark turning points on their way to adulthood
- Capable of self-awareness, insight, and empathy
- Can take on major responsibilities such as running a school store or raising money
- Careless with “unimportant” things such as cleaning their room and keeping track of assignments
- Like both group and individual work

P H Y S I C A L

- Very energetic; need lots of sleep, exercise, and food (including in-school snack)
- Enjoy physical education and sports
- Boys and girls both have growth spurts
- Girls show signs of puberty; most are menstruating

C O G N I T I V E

- May begin to excel at a subject (such as science) or skill (such as drawing)
- Understand and enjoy sarcasm, double meanings, and more sophisticated jokes
- Enthusiastic about school work they see as purposeful, such as research projects, science experiments, and drama productions
- Can set goals and concentrate well
- Very interested in civics, history, current events, environmental issues, and social justice

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