

Ages & Stages of Development

Look What I Can Do: Preschool – Kindergarten (2 to 6 Years)

Children these ages are beginning to notice more about the world around them and they are full of curiosity and questions. They are beginning to be aware of their place in their family and of how they fit into the larger world around them. They are learning to take responsibility for their actions and have the capacity to respond in a loving way to others. Helping children of this age know that they are loved just as they are helps to inspire confidence in their own abilities and they follow you as their example of how to be in the world.

Physical

- Full of energy and need exercise. Allow for active games.
- Greater coordination and control of large-muscle groups.
- More group oriented play.
- Can introduce games to the whole class.
- Adults need to demonstrate and teach good sportsmanship.
- They are developing fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. They can copy patterns, handle past or glue and tie shoes.

Cognitive

- Unable to see another's viewpoint – believe that their own perception is how others think
- Eager to learn and respond best to active involvement in the lesson.
- Use stories that are full of action, and allow children to give physical and verbal responses.
- Spell out expectations clearly.
- Help children find concrete examples of abstract concepts like kindness. What does it look like? What does it sound like? How can you tell if you are respecting others?
- Time is understood in one-day increments. Everything is here and now. Rewards and punishment must be immediate.

Moral

- Proud of their accomplishments
- Feelings easily hurt
- Thrive on praise and will cooperate with adults in order to praise and gain approval
- Role models are important. Adults need to support and obey class rules.
- Give praise for good behavior – will go to great lengths for individual attention.
- Emotions are fragile and mood changes can be abrupt.
- Expressing emotion in play is important for them to process their feelings.
- Sarcasm is very destructive to this age child. They are not always sure when an adult is pretending.

Social

- Conscious of their peers, so group dynamics can be used to channel classroom behavior.
- Become a cheerleader for good behavior. Catch every child doing something good.
- Avoid pointing out good behavior from the same child over and over.
- Passionate about fairness and will get upset if not handled with consistency.
- Class rules and consequences for breaking them need to be stated clearly.
- Include the kids in developing rules and consequences. This age is developing problem-solving skills.

Look What I Can Do: 1st, 2nd, 3rd Graders (6 to 9 Years)

Children these ages are changing dramatically. They are energetic, curious, imaginative, open and enthusiastic. They are developing friendships and what it means to be in relationship with one another. They still need adult help and reassurance but also need time on their own to explore new ideas and concepts. They are developing the ability to talk about and explain their ideas. Children of these ages need a lot of physical movement and activities that are broken into short segments. They are beginning to understand how and why things happen and to see other viewpoints. Help them become masters of their own lives by giving them multiple ways to explore the same idea or concept.

Physical

- Cannot sit still for more than a few moments without needing some movement.
- They are unable to move slowly as they are developing large-muscle groups. This accounts for their awkwardness and spills at this age.
- Active learning experiences are a must.
- Vary the pace, the focus and the setting throughout the lesson.

Cognitive

- They are concrete thinkers and have difficulty grasping abstract concepts and symbolism.
- Offer choices when possible. They love having input – it is part of the adventure.
- They enjoy a certain amount of repetition and the security of familiar routines. They learn to master an activity.
- Balance new activities with familiar ones to avoid discipline problems.
- Staying on schedule is helpful.
- Listening skills are developing, though their attention span is still only six or seven minutes. Girls tend to have a longer attention span than boys.
- Auditory learning is emerging. These kids are better able to handle verbal instructions and participate in questions, answers and discussions. Small groups work well at this age.
- Reading aloud should be done by the teacher or as a group to avoid discipline problems as students sound out words.
- These children think literally. Give instructions in concrete terms.

Moral

- They need to be understood for a healthy sense of self-worth.
- Make a point of calling their names and knowing their likes and dislikes and interests.
- These kids are in the “eraser age.” They are driven to master every skill and every task.
- They need extra approval because they are so hard on themselves.
- They may still express emotions with very little control. Redirect the child to appropriate ways of dealing with strong emotions.

Social

- They will clamor to be first at everything. They will need help learning to take turns and be considerate of others.
- They do not handle competition and losing very well. They may be insensitive to their peers and hypersensitive to their own acceptance.
- They are oriented toward cooperative activities.
- At this age they need to learn to work together, listen to everyone, accept group decisions and play various roles within a group.

Look What I Can Do: 4th & 5th Graders (9 to 11 Years)

This is a time of budding intellectual curiosity. Children of these ages move from being brooding and worried to happy and relaxed. They are looking for the “why” of things and are beginning to enjoy research and deeper exploration. They still enjoy adult encouragement and recognition and need adults to be lighthearted and empathetic. Their coordination is improving and still need lots of movement and activity. They can concentrate for longer periods of time but still need a variety of activities. Help them to develop stronger relationships with others by encouraging them to look past their own personal world and out into the bigger world around them. Also give them opportunities to challenge your explanations so that they develop the capacity to think for themselves.

Physical

- Both boys and girls of this age can react physically with speed and accuracy.
- They enjoy organized games and larger group activities.
- Their bodies are beginning to change.
- Girls are generally more mature than boys.

Cognitive

- Reading and writing have advanced.
- They can work independently for longer periods.
- More in-depth challenges and projects are appreciated.
- Interactive learning and small groups are effective where they share then come back together and discuss their findings with the whole class.
- At this age they see the potential for multiple correct answers and ideas.
- They will be discontent with just sitting and listening.
- An atmosphere of trust and acceptance is important to their self-confidence.

Moral

- Emotional fulfillment requires a broad spectrum of creative, meaningful activities.
- They enjoy educational games, music and art. It is important to demonstrate the relevance of their new experiences.
- Be a positive mentor that challenges and encourages them and sets high but reasonable goals.
- They are developing identities through the influence of their peers.
- They are looking for a place to belong.
- They have an extremely difficult time at this age accepting evaluation from an authority figure. It is better to guide a discussion in a small group.
- If you see teasing, put-downs and criticism, this may be a child with pent up anger. See if you can find out what is troubling the child because this is a red flag.

Social

- They are very concerned with the truth. They will tell the teacher “what really happened” regarding a conflict. Their goal is to develop a clear sense of right and wrong.
- It is still best to avoid highly competitive games.
- They desperately need approval from both adults and peers.
- More reasoning is possible in discipline as they grasp other points of view.
- Give them opportunities to discuss classroom expectations, rules, and consequences. The group experience strengthens your ability to create meaningful systems of discipline.
- They are reaching out to others more and showing more concern.

Look What I Can Do: Uniteens (11 to 14 Years)

Preteens are going through huge physical and emotional changes. They can be unpredictable and hard to read as they swing between childhood and adulthood. They are making an attempt to move into adulthood but can still be drawn to things in their childhood. Preteens are excited to be moving into the teen years but also scared of the unknown. They are exploring who they are and their peers are very important to them. We can help them by providing lots of opportunities for them to interact with their peers because their peer opinions are beginning to be of more importance than those of their teachers or parents. They are becoming more concerned with their personal appearance and need time and space to discover who they are and what is important to them. While they challenge authority they can also be open to guidance from adults who are not their parents or teachers.

Physical

- Kids are extremely sensitive about their differences at this age.
- They are full of energy but they tire easily and require more rest.
- Strenuous activity requires more recovery time.
- Overly tired kids will be unable to control their emotions, tongues and attitudes.
- They are devastated when they feel awkward and gain great satisfaction from mastering new skills.
- Are very concerned with their appearance and where they fit into the group. They need to feel a sense of belonging.

Cognitive

- Able to enjoy abstract thinking and like to explore many sides of an issue.
- They have well developed critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Like to focus on things they think are important and tend to be careless with things that they think are unimportant like cleaning their room.
- Are impulsive and don't yet have the full capacity to think things through in detail.
- They are beginning to question authority figures. They prefer to reason things through for themselves.

Moral

- Hormonal changes create mood changes and out of control emotions without apparent provocation.
- We need to remain calm and model mature emotional responses.
- Anger emerges due to fatigue, feelings of inadequacy, rejection and uncertainty.
- Forgiveness needs to characterize the teacher/student relationship.
- Fear often manifests as worry. They feel adults tend to dismiss their fears thinking they should have grown out of them.

Social

- It is normal for them to have a very close friend of the same gender.
- All boys tend to become rambunctious and rude, and a group of all girls will be "cliquish," gossip and catty. Most will respond to the teacher to stay on task.
- They are preoccupied with themselves. Even entering a room can be traumatic.
- Loners and less popular kids may need special help with social skills.
- Service projects are especially powerful in breaking the self-absorption.
- Need rituals that help them to mark turning points in their lives.
- Need opportunities to take on major responsibilities in the classroom.

Look What I Can Do: Y.O.U. (14 to 18 Years)

Teens are going through rapid changes and continued growth spurts. They face a lot of temptations and constant peer pressure. They spend a great deal of time worrying about how others view them. They are beginning to want to be treated as adults. They have the ability to think through problems on their own and want to be respected for who they are. Their emotions are often mixed, sometimes feeling like an adult and ready to assume more responsibility and sometimes feeling like they can't handle anything. They need healthy outlets for all of the emotions they are experiencing and to be around adults to offer guidance, support and love.

Physical

- Complete puberty and the physical transition from childhood to adulthood
- Reach nearly their adult height, especially females, males continue to grow into their twenties
- Sexually maturity

Cognitive

- Need the opportunity to explore how they personally feel about what they study in class
- Are able to engage in abstract thinking and discussion
- Want their opinions to matter
- Alternate between moments of brilliance and moments of “what were you thinking?”
- Need adults who will help them think through choices for their lives.
- Want to be respected for who they are no matter what that appears to be.
- Enhanced mental development and self-awareness
- Can consider hypothetical possibilities
- Increased ability to express and communicate personal values, ideas, beliefs and loyalties
- Need adult affirmation that their dreams for their lives are possible.
- Need adults to model positive behavior.

Moral

- Learning to regulate their own behavior based on values and principles of Universal Good, law, order and compassion.
- Some are reviewing established rules
- Competing moral values between, peers, family, school, church, etc...
- Concern for maintaining social order
- Moral judgment is motivated by a need to not be criticized by a true authority figure
- Understand their own feelings and have the ability to analyze why they feel a certain way.
- Begin to place less value on appearance and more on personality.

Social

- Want to spend time with their friends
- The task is to develop an integrated sense of self
- Failure to help an adolescent establish a sense of personal identity may lead to inadequacy, isolation and indecisiveness and role confusion.
- May resist commitments, wanting to be open for what the future may bring.
- Questions the desire to be an individual or part of the crowd.
- Behavior is influenced strongly by peers and cultural trends.
- Wants to be valued by adult authority figures.