



## Ages/Stages of Youth Development

| Grades K-2                                                        |                                                                                       |
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| <i>Characteristics</i>                                            | <i>Teaching Tips</i>                                                                  |
| Thinking is in the here and now ("concrete" thinkers).            | Youth need real experiences to learn.                                                 |
| Attention span is about 20-30 minutes.                            | Vary the length of activities based on how interested the youth appear.               |
| Begin to develop friendships, usually with youth of the same sex. | Plan activities that youth can do in groups rather than individually.                 |
| Want to be liked and to please adults.                            | Let youth know when they have done a good job.                                        |
| Learn best when physically active.                                | Allow youth to participate in activities where they can use physical energy.          |
| Have a special attachment to older youth.                         | Allow youth to choose an older youth to be their helper and role model.               |
| Are easily motivated.                                             | Use encouragement to keep them motivated.                                             |
| Competitive activities are less appropriate.                      | Plan some cooperative activities.                                                     |
| Differentiation between fantasy and reality can be difficult.     | Build in transitions and discussions to help distinguish the imaginary from the real. |

| Grades 3-5                                                                                |                                                                                                                          |
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| <i>Characteristics</i>                                                                    | <i>Teaching Tips</i>                                                                                                     |
| Learn best when physically active.                                                        | Allow youth to participate in activities where they can use physical energy.                                             |
| Have a special attachment to older youth.                                                 | Allow youth to choose an older youth to be their helper and role model.                                                  |
| Are easily motivated.                                                                     | Use encouragement to keep them motivated.                                                                                |
| Reading becomes an individual experience.                                                 | Allow time for youth to read on their own and think of activities before working with others.                            |
| Attention span is about 45 minutes.                                                       | Use varied activities to keep them interested.                                                                           |
| Acceptance by peer group is important.                                                    | Use the peer group to recognize good works, e.g., applauding completed activities and avoiding put-downs.                |
| Interests expand from home, to neighborhood, to community.                                | Talk to youth about friends and neighbors, and what goes on in their community. Involve them in community service.       |
| Enjoy both cooperation and competition.                                                   | Plan activities so that sometimes youth work together, sometimes compete with each other.                                |
| Show independence by seeking individual attention and sometimes disrupting the group.     | Involve youth in selecting activities they would like. Give individual attention.                                        |
| Feelings of competence enhance self-concept.                                              | Provide activities that will let youth feel good about themselves and succeed. Recognize them for their accomplishments. |
| Show loyalty to members of their own sex and antagonism toward those of the opposite sex. | Involve youth in choosing partners.                                                                                      |

| Grades 6-8                                                                          |                                                                                                                                          |
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| <i>Characteristics</i>                                                              | <i>Teaching Tips</i>                                                                                                                     |
| Can take responsibility in planning and evaluating own work.                        | Give youth responsibility for group activities, including planning, implementing and evaluating.                                         |
| Can plan own social and recreational activity.                                      | Provide opportunities for youth to work together. Form committees to plan recreational and social activities.                            |
| Can discuss current events, international affairs and social issues with some help. | Use discussion activities and games that encourage awareness of current events and issues.                                               |
| Want to make decisions but still depend on adult guidelines.                        | Establish guidelines that give parameters for youth to follow.                                                                           |
| Gain skills in social relations with peers and adults.                              | Provide activities that foster social interaction with peers and adults.                                                                 |
| Peer pressure mounts, first from same sex, then from opposite sex.                  | Use peer pressure to influence positive behavior. Have group give encouragement to individuals.                                          |
| Can be quite self-conscious.                                                        | Avoid asking youth to share their work individually until they feel more comfortable with the group.                                     |
| Strong emotional attachment to older youth and adults.                              | Encourage youth to participate in activities with older youth and adults.                                                                |
| Choices are often unrealistic.                                                      | Assist youth in making realistic choices. Review their plans, discuss alternatives and help them weight options before making decisions. |

| Grades 9-12                                                            |                                                                                                            |
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| <i>Characteristics</i>                                                 | <i>Teaching Tips</i>                                                                                       |
| Personal philosophy begins to emerge.                                  | Use activities where youth search for experiences that will allow them to identify their own philosophies. |
| Enjoy discussing the world situations, as well as personal activities. | Encourage discussion of events and feelings.                                                               |
| Abstract thinking and problem solving reach a higher level.            | Put youth into real-life, problem-solving situations.                                                      |
| Strong desire for status in peer group.                                | Develop a climate in which youth are encouraged and supported by peers.                                    |
| High interest in social activity.                                      | Encourage youth to plan and carry out own social activities.                                               |
| Need freedom from parental control to make decisions.                  | Help youth realize their decisions have consequences.                                                      |
| Widespread feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.                     | Encourage and help youth see their positive worth.                                                         |

*Source: Theater Arts Adventures, 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System, 1997*

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