



Middle Childhood: 6-8 Years

Middle childhood is a time when children develop in many ways. Children get taller, stronger, gain new skills and learn to read and write. Their personalities and feelings become more complex.

As children gain in size and coordination, they want to do real life activities. They enjoy helping rake leaves, shovel snow or wash the car. Yet growing up can't be rushed.

It takes time and practice to do many tasks well. Don't expect a perfect job when your school age child helps out around the house. But be sure to say how much you appreciate the support. For example, say, "You cleared all the snow off the sidewalk! That is such a big help to me!"



Young school age children can pay attention longer than preschool children. Because of this they sometimes like projects that can take from an hour to one or two days to complete. They like to solve problems while playing or doing simple household tasks. Often they can work out conflicts with friends.

Children, like adults, experience a range of emotions,. They can feel happy, proud, excited, and content. They also get angry, fearful, jealous, frustrated, and sad. Adults can help children learn to express their feelings in ways that other children and adults will accept.

Children need to feel they're valued members of their families. They need parents and guardians who care for them. They need to be shown love through hugs, kisses, and words such as, "I love you," "I'm proud of you," "I'm so glad you're my daughter (son)." School age children also need to face challenges and experience many successes at school and home.

Ideas for parents

Provide your child with:

- Time to talk. Children who talk often with their parents generally learn how to read well.
- Materials and time for active play, such as jumping rope, tumbling, biking, and sledding.
- Games with simple rules, such as board games, cards, dominoes, and marbles.
- Activities that involve other children where there are no "winners" or "losers." Completing a jigsaw puzzle or planting a garden are examples of fun activities where children cooperate rather than compete.

- Materials, equipment and space to develop interest, build skills and increase self-esteem. For example, encourage children to prepare food, make crafts, practice music, build models, or work with wood.
- Chances to collect items such as sea shells, sports cards, stamps, pretty buttons or pressed flowers. Arrange a place for your child to put special collections, for example in a storage box, a special book, or on a shelf.
- Books for reading, paper and pencils for writing stories or letters, large sheets of paper to “publish” a newspaper or make a sign, a tablet with blank pages for keeping a journal. Encourage reading and writing through fun activities.
- Many trips outside the home. Field trips to museums, work places, other neighborhoods, farms, state parks and cities help children learn about their world.
- Ways to be creative. Encourage your child to think about everyday things in different ways. For example, ask your child “How many uses can you think of for an empty soda bottle?” Ask your child questions about how things work. “How does a clock work?” “How does the heat get to different parts of our home?”

A parent is a child’s most important teacher. Parents help children develop skills and interests, and adopt values. Learning about development will help you know what to expect of your child.

It’s important to remember that your child is unique. Each child learns and grows at his or her own pace. The information given here is only a guide. If you have questions about your child’s development, contact your pediatrician or health care professional.

Physical development

Children:

- are active and have a good sense of balance when walking and running.
- chase other children when playing, climb trees and like to run and spin in circles.
- enjoy showing muscle strength and motor skills.
- repeat an activity over and over until they learn it.
- use scissors and small tools.
- tie shoelaces.
- copy designs, shapes, letters and numbers.
- learn to snap fingers, wink and whistle.
- show development of permanent teeth.
- may have awkward appearance because of long arms and legs.
- may be clumsy and tend to “fidget.”



Mental development

Children:

- may reverse printed letters, for example, they may write ‘d’ for ‘b.’
- plan for and build objects, but may become upset or frustrated before the project is done.
- learn new words by reading and talking with other children and adults.
- learn to read and remember stories.
- like to hear stories about children in other times and places.
- can pay attention longer than preschoolers.
- know the difference between left and right.

- begin to understand time and the days of the week.
- learn best by seeing, feeling and hearing.
- enjoy games but don't like losing.
- like to explore their neighborhood or community.
- may have a hard time making choices.
- like to tell and hear jokes.



Social and emotional development

Children:

- want to spend time with friends.
- play more with similar friends - girls with girls, boys with boys.
- may have a “best” friend and an “enemy.”
- want to perform well, and do things right.
- begin to see things from another child’s point of view, but still very self-centered.
- like to be praised; don’t like to be criticized.
- see things as black and white, right or wrong, wonderful or terrible; have little understanding for the “in between.”
- like the security of groups, organized play and clubs.
- generally enjoy caring for and playing with younger children when adults are nearby to supervise.
- like adults to pay attention to their behavior and schoolwork.
- may pretend to be someone on television or a character in a book.
- talk about their thoughts and feelings.
- play for hours and practice different roles.
- make gifts for friends and family members.
- learn table manners and listen as well as talk at mealtime.
- are eager to help adults.
- like one-on-one contact.

Toys and hobbies

- Arts and crafts materials
- Musical instruments
- Sports equipment
- Construction sets
- Bicycles (use helmets)
- Simple models
- Board games with easy to understand directions

Books

For parents:

Parent’s Guide for the Best Books for Children, Eden Ross Lipson

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk, Adele Faber and Elizabeth Mazlish

Caring for Your School-age Child, American Academy of Pediatrics

Pick Up Your Socks: A Practical Guide to Raising Responsible Children, Elizabeth Cray

For children:

Little House in the Big Woods, Laura Ingalls Wilder
The Kind Next Door and Other Headaches: Stories About Adam Joshua, Janice Lee Smith
Ramons, Beverly Cleary
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, Judith Viorst
Anna Banana and Me, Lenore Blegvard
A Chair for My Mother, Vera Williams
Everybody Needs a Rock, Byrd Baylor
The Garden of Abdul Gasazi, Chris Van Allsburg

Sources:

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University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. Family Focus: Parenting the School Age Child.
The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Newsletter, 1996, vol. 12, no. 6 and vol. 12, no. 4.

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