

Common Characteristics of a 5 year old

Characteristics of Kindergarten Children

Children move through stages of development as they mature. The rate of development varies from one child to another. Development is influenced by the experiences children have, as well as by hereditary factors. Children may grow rapidly in one area and more slowly in another. The direction of development is from general to specific, from dependence toward independence and interdependence, and from gross motor control toward fine motor control.

Kindergarten children, no matter what their cultural and experiential background, have characteristics in common with other children of their age and characteristics that are particularly their own.

Socio-emotional Development

Children develop socially and emotionally during the Kindergarten year. At the beginning of the year some children may be shy and appear to lack initiative. However, as they come to know the situation, the teachers and peers, they usually gain confidence and begin to establish friendships and become an active part of the class. Other children may be too assertive prior to learning from experience more appropriate ways of relating to peers. It is a time of testing and exploring social relationships.

Kindergarten children are eager to be trusted with responsibility. They appreciate going on errands, using proper tools, participating with grown-ups in such activities as cooking, bringing things from home, and suggesting solutions to practical problems. Although there are some senses in which Kindergarten students are still egocentric (that is, tied to their own view of things) they are also able, in a suitable group environment, to be of help to each other.

They can show considerable empathy toward people and animals when their own needs do not conflict with the needs of others. When helpfulness is noticed, modeled and encouraged by the teacher, helpful behavior is likely to become more common in the classroom. Kindergarten children are developing a sense of independence but are also learning to work cooperatively with others.

Kindergarten children are more stable socio-emotionally than they were as preschoolers. They are developing a good sense of humor, which they express by delighting in nonsense and playing with language. They may develop specific fears, such as the fear of death, and mistakenly assume that they have caused such events as their parents

separating. Kindergarten students take criticism, name calling and teasing very seriously because they still think that what is said exists in reality--at its face value.

Physical Development

Physical activity is one common characteristic of Kindergarten children, although children vary a great deal in the development of physical skills and abilities. Some children are slow and cautious about trying new things; others seem to accept any challenge that is presented. Most Kindergarten children are full of energy, ready to run, swing, climb and jump, and are eager to try their strength by moving big blocks or boxes. They are developing a sense of rhythm, and enjoy such activities as marching, jumping or clapping to music. These group activities need to be short and allow for more participation than standing. Required stillness is more exhausting and stressful for most Kindergarten students than movement.

Sensory development is uneven. The coordination of the eyes and other senses are still developing. Physical growth has slowed down. It is a time of consolidating gains and developing fine motor control. However, over-emphasis on fine motor activities such as writing, cutting and making very discrete visual discriminations may result in tension and frustration.

Intellectual Development

Kindergarten children love to talk. Their intellectual development is reflected in the rapid growth of vocabulary and the power to express ideas. They are developing visual and auditory memory and the ability to listen to others. Their ears are keen but they still need help in distinguishing sounds, although they can pick up another language and accurately imitate other people's intonations and inflections. They are especially keen to acquire new words (the names of dinosaurs, for example) and to use such words as "infinity" and "trillion". Kindergarten children welcome opportunities to be inventive with language, to play with rhyming, to joke, to explain things to each other and even to argue.

Opportunities to talk about what they are doing, what they see and what they hear help children construct meaning and learn from their experiences. The language and ideas shared by others enable children to gradually organize and attach meaning to their daily observations and activities.

Kindergarten children have a powerful urge to find out about things, to figure things out. They ask many questions, often deep unanswerable questions and they love to play guessing games or solve riddles. Their curiosity leads them to figure out concepts and relationships, and become interested in symbols. They enjoy listening to stories, but they do not learn very much from passive attention to the teacher or mere listening to information. **The intellectual growth of Kindergarten students comes from exploration, testing and investigating rather than only from listening.**

The children are still figuring out the properties of objects and are not yet able to reverse operations, that is, to understand that 250 ml of water in a tall narrow glass and 250 ml of water in a large, flat pan are equal in volume. Their reasoning, from an adult perspective, is still illogical. Happenings that occur together are thought to have a causal relationship to each other, for example, "*Because I wore my new shoes, it rained.*"

Individual Differences

Descriptions of general characteristics are helpful in understanding children. However, such normative statements do not provide the information teachers need about particular children. The teacher's systematic observations of children provide the information needed for appropriate planning.

During the Kindergarten year, the behavior of many children changes from the relatively rambunctious behavior of a four- year-old to the relatively mature and responsive behavior of a five-year-old.

Social: Early 5

- Likes to help out
- Follow rules

Later 5s

- May test or oppose adult authority or show uncertainty
- Need consistent rules and enforcement
- Responds well to clear and simple expectations
- Need empathetic discipline as they test limits and make mistakes

Physical

- Better control of running, jumping and other large movements
- Need lots of physical activity, including free play
- Pencil grip changes from three finger to other grips
- Able to see close objects best - not yet able to sweep focus smoothly from left to right
- Reads one word at a time
- Copying from a blackboard is difficult

Cognitive

- See only one way to do things; rarely see other points of view
- Imaginative and believe toys and other objects are alive
- Think very literally (raining cats and dogs means cats and dogs are falling from the sky)
- Often reverses letters and numbers
- Early in the year likes to copy and repeat activities; later likes to try more new activities
- Often thinks out loud before acting (I am going to move the truck)

- Learns best by exploring materials such as blocks, clay , finger paints, rocks and shells

Common Characteristics of a 6 year old

Social:

- Competitive; not always good at sports; sometimes bossy or critical
- Either rush to be first or dawdle to be last
- Want to have friends; may have best friends
- Enjoy dressing up, putting on plays, etc. with other children
- Talkative and noisy
- Easily upset when criticized or discouraged
- Love encouragement (who doesn't), surprises and treats
- Might test authority with tantrums, complaining or tattling

Physical

- Eyes are maturing so reading is easier, but blackboard copying is still hard
- Often chew pencils, hair or fingernails (may be due to the discomfort of new teeth growing in)
- Bodies growing rapidly
- Like lots of physical activity
- Tire easily and get sick often

Cognitive

- Beginning to understand past and present and how and why things happen
- More able to see other viewpoints and understand reasons for rules
- Love new ideas and asking questions
- Learn well through games, poems, riddles and songs
- Very ambitious, often choosing projects that are too hard
- Learn well from field trips and hands-on projects
- Like doing lots of work; not that concerned with the quality of the work

Common Characteristics of a 7 year old

Social:

- May be moody, shy, sulky, touchy; sometimes depressed
- Prefer playing and working alone or with one friend
- May change friendships quickly and feel nobody likes them
- Rely on adults for help and reassurance
- Need the security of rules, routines and physical boundaries

Physical

- Often keep their eyes focused on a small, close area
- Copying from board is hard
- With head on arm or desk, grasp pencil point tightly and write very small
- Can do quiet work for longer periods of time
- Can get sick from worrying about tests and assignments, etc.

Cognitive:

- Better at understanding ideas such as time, space and quantity
- Learn new words and meanings quickly, enjoy writing stories
- Open to learning math
- Good at classifying such as sorting buttons, pictures, leaves and shapes
- Listen well and speak precisely
- Enjoy hands-on exploration of how things work
- Bothered by mistakes and try hard to make their work perfect
- Like to work slowly and finish what they start
- Enjoy repeating tasks and reviewing learning

Common Characteristics of an 8 year old

Social

- Love group activities and cooperative work
- Prefer playing with peers of the same gender
- Like to talk and explain ideas
- Good sense of humor
- Adjust well to change; bounce back quickly from mistakes or disappointments

Physical

- Full of energy; play hard, work quickly and tire easily – do better with several short play breaks than one long one
- Eyes able to focus well on objects near and far
- May have growth spurt
- Limited attention span; short exercise breaks help concentration
- Better control of eyes and hands allow cursive writing and copying from board

Cognitive

- Industrious, impatient and full of ideas; often take on more than they can handle
- Listen well but may not always remember what they've heard
- Getting good at handwriting, handcrafts, computers and drawing
- May give up when things are hard but soon want to try again
- Interested in rules, logic and fairness

Common Characteristics of a 9 year old

Social

- Very competitive, yet may form cliques
- Complain a lot; criticize self and others (including adults)
- Often say “I hate it,” “I can’t,” “It’s boring,” etc.
- Like to work with same-gender partner
- Can work in groups but with lots of arguing
- Enjoy exaggeration, dirty jokes and graffiti
- Need adults to be patient and explain clearly
- Need adult lightheartedness, humor and encouragement to lighten their mood and relieve anxiety

Physical

- Coordination is better; boys love to rough house
- Like to push physical limits; get tired easily
- Complain about aches and pains and injuries
- Restless; can’t sit still for long
- May bite nails or twist hair to relieve tension

Cognitive

- Worry about world events, parents’ health, friends, school, etc.
- Work hard and pay attention to detail, but may jump quickly between interests
- Less imaginative than at 8 years old
- Want factual explanations; enjoy scientific exploration
- Have trouble understanding abstractions such as large numbers, long periods of time and vast areas of space
- Love language and word play
- Begin to see the bigger world, including issues of justice and fairness
- Enjoy “interests” clubs such as stamp collecting, chess or rock collecting clubs

Common Characteristics of a 10 year old

Social:

- 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

Physical

- 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

Cognitive

- Very good at memorizing facts
- Enjoy collecting, organizing and classifying
- Like rules and logic; open to learning about scientific principles, government 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 an 11 year old

Social:

- 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

Physical

- 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.

Cognitive

- 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 a 12 year old

Social

- 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

Physical

- 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

Cognitive:

- 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 production
- Can set goals and concentrate well
- Very interested in civics, history, current events, environmental issues and social justice

Common Characteristics of a 13 year old

Social

- Moody and sensitive; anger can flare up suddenly
- Feelings are easily hurt; can easily hurt others' feelings
- Very concerned about personal appearance
- Like to be left alone when at home
- Prefer working alone or with one partner
- Spend hours on the phone or computer and with video games on TV
- Decorate their bedrooms to show personality and independence
- A lot of peer pressure in what to wear, how to talk and what music to listen to
- Girls tend to focus on close friendships, boys tend to travel in small groups
- Challenge the ideas and authority of parents and teachers
- Answer parents with a single word or loud, extreme language
- Often mean (may stem from being insecure or scared)

Physical

- Lots of physical energy
- Skin problems are common; hygiene becomes more important
- Most girls are menstruating and have almost reached full physical development
- Most boys are showing first signs of puberty (will reach full development at age fourteen or fifteen) and are physically awkward
- Changing bodies make gym, health and sex education embarrassing

Cognitive

- Tentative, worried, unwilling to take risks on tough intellectual tasks
- Interested in fairness, justice, discrimination
- Often write better than they speak so better at written work than oral explanations
- Need short, predictable homework assignments to build good study habits
- Starting to enjoy thinking about the many sides of an issue

Common Characteristics of a 14 year old

Social

- Need adult connection even while fighting for their own identity
- Need adults to listen and negotiate rules and requirements
- Fiercely criticize parents' dress, ideas, friends, etc.
- Mimic adult behaviors but resent adult lectures
- Know it all; can be extremely oppositional
- May be troublesome at home while excelling at school
- Typically, loud and rambunctious
- Can rise up to leadership challenges in student council, peer tutoring, etc.
- Without safe rites of passage, may drift toward alcohol and drugs
- Work well in small groups
- Both boys and girls are more interested in sex; some are sexually active

Physical

- Very energetic, generally healthy; most would rather go to school than stay home when sick in order to be with peers
- Need lots of exercise, snacks and sleep
- Girls almost fully developed
- Boys may continue growth spurts and show signs of puberty

Cognitive

- Better at thinking abstractly – for example, understanding ideas such as freedom
- Enjoy individual skills (music, art, etc.)
- Like technology and learning how things work
- Respond well to variety and challenge; enjoy research
- Complain about homework, but often enjoy the challenge
- Like having a chance to revise and improve work
- Often say “I’m bored” to mean “I don’t understand”
- May see academic success as “nerdy” and “uncool”