

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