

## Child development: 6-9 years

- ✓ [Social/emotional development](#)
- ✓ [Developing understanding](#)
- ✓ [Physical development](#)
- ✓ [Speech/language development](#)
- ✓ [What you can do](#)
- ✓ [Activities for 6-9 year-olds](#)
- ✓ [What to watch out for](#)
- ✓ [Summary](#)

Each age in the 'middle years' tends to have its own special characteristics, for example: six can be a bit bossy and demanding, seven tends to worry and take life seriously, eight is enthusiastic and outgoing and nine independent and rather rebellious. These are of course, big generalisations, but you will probably see an emphasis on these qualities in your child's unique personality at these ages.



### Important note

The information in this topic is a guide only. Children develop at different rates and in different ways. If you are worried about your child's development or if your child's development is very different from other children of the same age, have a talk with a health professional. If there is a problem, getting in early will help. If there isn't a problem the reassurance will save you some worry.

### Social/emotional development

Over these middle years you will see the gradual development of your child's social skills and an increasing ability to relate to the outside world at school and with friends. Children have a great desire to fit in and be accepted by their peer group and some degree of peer group acceptance is essential for their self esteem.

Try to help them negotiate their way through the peer group 'rules' about what they 'have' to wear and what is acceptable to take for lunch. You can help them come to some sensible compromises between family values and peer group values. Peer group values are sometimes both rigid and superficial, but cannot be completely ignored.

At this age many children want to play with children of the same sex and sometimes stereotype members of the opposite sex. This is normal, and offers you the opportunity to point out that both sexes are capable of doing lots of different things not just 'boy' or 'girl' things.

While children of six and seven share activities and enjoy each other's company, it is usually not until they are eight that they begin to be capable of truly imagining what it is like to be the other person and forming sustained friendships. They have lots of energy, and because of their sometimes narrow

and rigid emphasis on sticking to 'the rules' their efforts to play together in a group can easily go astray. Adult guidance and assistance can help to keep their play positive.

At different ages and according to personality children in these years are likely to be full of bravado and over confidence or conversely full of grave doubts about themselves.

They will be beginning to be more responsible.

They will have some understanding of rules at six years, and at seven may want to add some rules of their own.

They will be starting to be more careful of their own belongings (at about nine years).

They will like to win at games but will not yet be able to lose cheerfully.

They may tell lies or steal. They may not yet have fully developed the adult understanding of right and wrong.

They will be starting to like team games (eight years).

They will like going to school unless they have some problem there.

They may have problems with friends, most children do from time to time.

At 8-9 years they are starting to understand another person's view of things.

Most children enjoy going to a sleepover at a friend's house.

### Developing understanding

Children in the middle years are often very excited by and genuinely interested in the outside world. They can absorb information with enthusiasm and they frequently remember remarkable detail about subjects that interest them.

By nine they are sometimes already developing preferences for certain subjects at school or particular areas of interest. They have beginning skills in reading, writing and maths and the capacity to express relatively complex ideas.

Their thinking processes are very subject to their emotions and self-esteem. If they are worried or unhappy they will not concentrate or 'think properly' and generally they don't have the strength to overcome this until their worries are sorted out.

Similarly, if their self-esteem is low they may be reluctant to try new tasks in case they fail.

Cognitive development in these years has a lot to do with feeling settled and supported to try new things and to extend themselves.

Your child in the middle years will:

- like to have collections (stamps, games, cards, etc)
- understand that Father Christmas is not real at about 7-8 years
- be able to tell the time

- begin to have some understanding of money (six years)
- read to themselves
- start to plan ahead
- be able to tell the time by 7-8 years
- know left hand from right.

### Physical development

In these years many children place great emphasis on the development of their own physical ability. Being able to do handstands, hit the ball, ride fast, etc. often carries considerable status within the peer group, particularly for boys. Children of this age will really appreciate an adult watching their efforts with a realistic and encouraging attitude.

Generally speaking energy levels are high and they will:

- be able to draw a picture of a house and will include the garden and sky
- be able to ride a two-wheeler bike
- like to climb and swim
- be able to throw and catch a ball.

### Speech/language development

By seven your child should be speaking clearly and easily in the language you use at home. She will be expressing a range of ideas and describing complicated happenings.

Sometimes a child will still have a lisp or 'bump' in her speech as it matures from 'baby speech'. If it is embarrassing or socially awkward then you should seek a professional assessment.

Your child will know the different tenses (past, now and future) and be able to use correct tenses in sentences.

She will like to tell jokes and riddles.

At about eight she will be confident using the telephone.

Many will be beginning to enjoy reading a book on their own.

### What you can do

Children in the middle years can often be well-behaved and keen to fit in and for this reason they can be the last to get attention in busy families.

They have many social and emotional issues to work out at school and within their peer group and sometimes they need adult help to resolve problems that arise. However they won't always tell you about difficulties unless they feel you have the time to listen without being put under pressure. Giving them your time to listen to them and take an interest in them is the best, most helpful thing you can do for your school-aged child.

Read to them – this is special for children at any age.

Don't let them watch too much television/videos.

Don't be too intimidated by the famous phrase 'everyone else has seen/done it!'

Provide small and special fun times in the weeks' routine.

Provide daily encouragement that is realistic.

Don't let them worry about 'grown-up' matters too much (like bills and adult relationships).

Don't program their time too much. Children need time just to 'be' and to play.

### Activities for 6-9 year-olds

Provide a variety of computer, board and word games. Join the local library.

Provide her with simple building kits, children's tool kits, dolls and opportunities for playing in cubby houses.

Provide opportunities to listen to a radio/tape recorder.

Provide bats and balls and play with your child.

Kick a football with your child.

Provide opportunities to help in the kitchen and to make simple recipes such as biscuits or salads.

Provide opportunities to join sporting or other clubs.

See what hobbies interest your children and encourage them in those activities.

Encourage your child to try games that are often seen as 'only for girls' or 'only for boys'. Girls might have a lot of fun playing soccer with you, boys might love cooking.

### What to watch out for

- Your child has problems making friends.
- Your child is regularly being aggressive or a bully.
- Your child is frequently lying or cheating.
- Your child has difficulty separating from you.
- She is unable to keep up with the other children in class.
- She has any problems with bowel or bladder that have no clear physical cause.

### Summary

Social/emotional development

Your 6-9 year old will:

- want to fit in with peer group rules
- start to form closer friendships at about eight years old
- like to play with same-sex friends

- need adult help to sort out arguments and disagreements in play
- be a bit brash and bossy or timid and uncertain.

#### Developing understanding

- Good thinking skills depend on your 6-9 year old being relatively free from worry.
- They will read to themselves.
- They will take a lively interest in certain subjects by nine.

#### Physical skillsYour 6-9 year old can:

- run, jump, skip, hit a ball, climb and swing
- place emphasis on achieving in physical ways
- enjoy playing team games by age eight
- sometimes misjudge their ability before age nine.

#### Speech and languageYour 6-9 year old will:

- speak fluently and describe complicated happenings
- read out loud
- know different tenses and grammar.

#### What you can do

- Listen to their stories.
- Encourage them in a realistic way.
- Watch them in their physical endeavours.
- Give them a little individual time each day.

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Rated ★★★★★ (47 ratings)

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## GLOSSARY

### cognitive

Relating to the mental processes of knowing, thinking, learning, remembering and being aware.

### tenses

The forms of verbs (doing words) that indicate when the action they describe takes place - in the past, present or future. For example, 'run' is the present tense; 'ran' is the past tense.

#### More to explore

- ▶ School-age children at play
- ▶ Child development: 5-6 years

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