



AGES AND STAGES: UNDERSTANDING CHILD DEVELOPMENT HELPS IN HOME SCHOOLING

Parents of school-age youth are now finding themselves in the role of educator or homeschool director. Understanding the developmental stages of school-age children and what to expect at different stages of development can make home-based education more productive and less stressful. Once you know what to expect from your kids developmentally, you can provide the most appropriate educational experience. Below are some characteristics of children at different developmental stages and practical tips that parents can use to be better home educators.

If your child is between 5 and 8 years old:

- They learn best with physical activity. Allow them to move around.
- Their attention span ranges between 12 and 24 minutes. After this, it's time to change focus unless the activity is highly engaging.
- Activities revolving around things that they are or can become familiar with are best for this age group. Look for activities that involve their senses or something they have some experience with.
- They are naturally very curious, so be flexible, prepare for questions and allow for spontaneity.
- They are more interested in doing activities rather than completing them. Focus activities on the process rather than the end product.



- Provide as much positive feedback and encouragement as possible and make sure to plan activities at which they can be successful.
- Make clear rules and stick to them. Be clear about what behavior is okay and what behavior is not okay.

If your child is between 9 and 11 years old:

- They still have lots of energy. Plan to use it with physical activity. Include movement in activities.
- Their attention span is between 20 and 30 minutes. After this, it's time to refocus unless the activity is highly engaging.
- Use simple and short instructions and be aware of reading levels.
- They are easily motivated and eager to try new things. Plan a variety of activities.
- Avoid comparing them with other youth and focus on their individual strengths and successes.
- Help them develop their own sense of right and wrong as well as responsibility.
- Help them set goals for themselves.

If you child is between 12 and 14 years old:

- Their attention span is between 25 and 40 minutes. After this, it's time to refocus unless the activity is highly engaging.
- They are starting to move away from dependency on you. This is a sign of maturity and not rejection. Prepare yourself for it!
- Involve them in setting rules. You have the final say, but allow them to have a voice in the process.



- Encourage learning experiences related to self-discovery, self-understanding and getting along with others.
- Their thinking is becoming more complex and out-of-the-box. Ask questions that encourage predicting and problem solving. Help them find solutions on their own by providing supervision without interference.
- It's important to respect their opinions and consider their thoughts and feelings.

If your child is between 15 and 18 years old:

- Their attention span is up to 48 minutes.
- Expect them to be responsible and expect them to follow through on their commitments.
- Allow them to plan parts of their own day.
- Help them discover their talents and potential career and college pathways.

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