

# Ohio State University Fact Sheet

## State 4-H Office

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## Ages and Stages of Youth Development

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### True or False?

Circle whether you think these statements are true or false. The correct answers are in the next section.

T	F	1. Children's levels of intelligence are influenced by early learning experiences.
T	F	2. All youth learn best by doing.
T	F	3. The types of toys children play with influences language development.
T	F	4. Over half of black American children under 18 years old live with both their parents.
T	F	5. Teenagers are more likely to be victims of all types of crime (violence, rape/sexual assault, robbery, assault, and theft) than any other age group.
T	F	6. Adolescence is characteristically a stormy period marked by outright rebellion.
T	F	7. Except infancy, humans grow more rapidly during the adolescent growth spurt than at any other time in their lives.

T

F

8. One sign of serious disturbance in young adolescents is a preoccupation with conformity to others in their peer group and the desire not to be too "different"

T

F

9. Young adolescents tend to focus on issues of fairness and label adult efforts to compromise as "hypocrisy" because they generally are not developmentally able to see the "gray areas" between right and wrong.

T

F

10. Punishment does not work.

T

F

11. Youth cannot relate future interests to future vocational, social, and cultural roles until cognitive skills are developed in young adolescence.

T

F

12. Fewer children are living below the poverty line since the "war on poverty" started.

## Why It Is Important to Understand Youth Development Ages and Stages

Youth development is the "reason for being" of the Ohio 4-H Program. Both the Ohio 4-H Mission (to enable youth to reach their fullest potential as capable, competent, caring, and contributing citizens), and the 4-H Pledge (which highlights the development of young people's heads, hearts, hands, and health) illustrate that fourfold youth development is a central focus of Ohio 4-H. 4-H youth development includes:

1. **Intellectual development (4-H Professional Research Knowledge (PRK) Base)**
  - a. Development of the Head for clearer thinking... (4-H Pledge)
  - b. Development of competent citizens... (4-H Mission)
2. **Emotional development (4-H PRK Base)**
  - a. Development of the Heart for greater loyalty... (4-H Pledge)
  - b. Development of caring citizens... (4-H Mission)
3. **Social development (4-H PRK Base)**
  - a. Development of Hands for larger service... (4-H Pledge)
  - b. Development of contributing citizens... (4-H Mission)
4. **Physical development (4-H PRK Base)**
  - a. Development of Health for better living... (4-H Pledge)

b. Development of capable citizens... (4-H Mission)

5. **For**

a. The betterment of clubs, communities, the country, and the world (4-H Pledge)

b. Changing and improving our diverse society (4-H Mission)

c. Strengthening family relationships, solving issues and problems, and developing life roles (Extension Mission)

It is the responsibility of every 4-H professional and volunteer to make sure all 4-H programs enhance the fourfold development of youth. To do this, we must understand "where kids are" and the "ages and stages of youth development." There are many widely held myths about youth development. (For example, all the odd-numbered items in the previous section are true and all the even-numbered items are false. How did you do?) The next section outlines some of the youth development basics every 4-H professional and volunteer should know.

## **Young Children (grades K-3)**

### **Physical development**

- ! In a period of slow physical growth
- ! Learning to master physical skills
- ! Lack muscular coordination skills

### **Emotional development**

- ! Are egocentric/self-centered (4-H should provide experiences which require sharing/cooperation to help children move beyond self-centeredness).
- ! Need and seek approval from adults (By the end of this stage begin to compare themselves with others like to play games, but can't accept losing).
- ! Intellectual development
- ! More interested in doing things than in the end product (Need practice focusing on one thing at a time to move to the next stage).
- ! Thinking is concrete (Learn through senses by touching, seeing, smelling, tasting, and hearing rather than by thinking alone, verbal instruction should be accompanied by demonstration).

### **Social development**

- ! Learning to be friends with others.
- ! Younger kids enjoy playing together, but by the end of the stage, boys and girls will separate.
- ! Fighting occurs but does not have lasting effects.

## **School Age Children (grades 4-8)**

### **Physical development**

- ! Very active and enjoy things which involve movement, cannot sit still for long periods of time.
- ! Beginning of adolescence is marked by a growth spurt which occurs across a wide range of ages, with females maturing before males. (Rapid physical changes are often a source of embarrassment for young teens.)

### **Emotional development**

- ! Have a weak sense of individual identity (Need to feel accepted and worthwhile, successes should be emphasized and failures kept in perspective as learning opportunities).
- ! By the end of the period, begin to demonstrate Kohlberg's post-conventional moral thinking.
- ! During puberty, changes in hormones and changes in thinking contribute to mood swings.

- ! Begin to test value, (Justice and equality become regarded as important issues).
- ! Feel the need to be part of something important.

### **Intellectual development**

- ! Until around age 10 or 11, think concretely in absolutes (black/white, right/wrong), but are beginning to think logically (new ideas are best understood if related to previous experiences),
- ! Around age 10 or 11 begin to demonstrate formal operational thinking and think abstractly, but still tend to think in all-or-nothing terms.
- ! Will intensely explore subjects of interest.
- ! Often reject solutions offered by adults in favor of finding their own solutions.

### **Social development**

- ! Joining clubs and groups becomes very important around age 9-10, (will form clubs with a group of others similar to themselves).
- ! Have difficulty understanding others' thinking, but understand the benefit of making others happy.
- ! Satisfaction in completing projects comes more from pleasing adults in their lives than from the value of the activity itself.
- ! By the end of this period:
  - 9 ready to start being responsible for actions;
  - 9 move away from dependence on parents toward eventual independence;
  - 9 dependence on opinions of adults shifts to dependence on opinions of peers enjoy doing activities away from home.

## **High School Age Youth**

### **Physical development**

- ! Physical changes are accepted by most teens, and most awkwardness is past, although some boys are still growing quickly.
- ! Most females reach maximum height by age 14, most males by age 16, males gain muscle, females gain fat. Both sexes are still developing bone mass.

### **Emotional development**

- ! Searching for independence and identity, usually achieved around age 16.
- ! Seeking emotional autonomy from parents.
- ! Younger teens have difficulty with compromise.
- ! Unsettled emotions are common.
- ! Take pride in responsibility and respect of others.

### **Intellectual development**

- ! Continue to gain cognitive and study skills, can adapt language to different contexts.
- ! Mastering abstract thinking.
- ! Exploring and preparing for future careers and roles.
- ! Set goals based on feelings of personal needs and priorities, likely to reject goals set by others.

### **Social development**

- ! Generally self-centered, but capable of empathy.
- ! Relationship skills are well developed.
- ! Dating increases and moves from group dates to double dates to couple only dating and intimacy.

- ! Acceptance by opposite sex is of high importance.
  - ! Want to belong to groups, but be recognized as unique individuals within the groups.
  - ! Employment and education fill the need for social relationships which were earlier filled by club and group activities.
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