

Discover Your Child's World

(Age-group Characteristics)

I. Helpful hints for working with children at a particular stage of their development

Nursery (Ages 0-3) Age of Discovery

They are actors, discoverers, self-centered, imitators.

1. Their attention span is 3-6 minutes so keep your program moving and varied.
2. Things need to be familiar to the child so he will feel comfortable—teacher, room, toys, etc.
3. Since they learn through the five senses, have things for them to touch, taste, smell, see and hear.
4. They love rhythm and rhyme—use music and activities.
5. They can understand simple concepts about God. Use meaningful Bible stories to teach them.
6. At this age, the children will play alone or parallel to others—doing the same thing someone else is doing, but not together.



Pre-primary (Ages 4-5) Age of Questioning

They are players, questioners, self-centered, believers.

1. Allow for activity—they *need* to move.
2. Allow them to touch and examine things—still learning through their five senses.
3. Always start your teaching time with something familiar—go from the known to the unknown.
4. They are still self-centered, but should be encouraged to share and take turns—they will play together now.
5. Be sure to teach them Bible verses—they can learn and understand them.

6. The child can be taught more about God—how to talk to Him and to thank Him for what He has done for them.
7. Clearly present the message of salvation and invite them to receive Christ as Savior.



Primary (Ages 6-8) Age of Activity

They are group players, observers, energetic, discerners.

1. Allow for activity—the attention span has now reached 15-20 minutes, so varied activity is still needed.
2. They enjoy and want to learn—encourage them to memorize Bible verses.
3. Appeal to their concern for the welfare of others by telling stories of other children and urge witnessing and missionary giving.
4. Clearly present that God's Word is true, the events really happened—they can know the difference between fact and fiction.
5. Present the salvation message and invite them to receive Christ.



Junior (Ages 9-11) Age of Energy

They are rovers, investigators, gang-spirited, worshipers.

1. Provide a variety of constructive things to do.
 Challenge their abilities with projects and Bible games.
 They like being involved in difficult and competitive things.
2. Excellent memory—encourage much memory work.
3. Hero worshipers—present Christ as their hero.
4. They recognize sin as sin—point them to Christ who can save them from sin.
5. Use visuals to teach doctrinal truth and growth.



Young Teen (Ages 12-14) Age of Change

They are changing, critical, seek companions, may balk at receiving Christ.

1. They are changing and awkward—find things they can do well to help build a more positive self-image.
2. They are influenced by great peer pressure.
Challenge them to find good friends.
Provide activities they can do together.
3. Know their interests and incorporate them into the program.
4. Challenge and inspire them to give their lives to the Lord so God can use them.
5. They desperately need guidance from God's Word.

II. General laws of learning for all ages

- A. **Readiness**—teach when the child's mind is open and ready to learn.
When he asks questions about a certain subject
When his daily life is involved with what you are teaching
- B. **Effect**—children remember good experiences and want to repeat them—they try to avoid those that are unpleasant.
- C. **Use**—to really understand and remember what you teach, the child must *do* something about it.
- D. **Repetition**—the more a lesson is repeated, the better a child remembers it.
- E. **Recency**—the more recently a subject was studied the easier it is to recall.
- F. **By-product learning**—no lesson stands alone.
Other ideas outside of the lesson shape constructive and destructive attitudes.
A child is shaped by his inherited characteristics, environment, culture, intelligence, devotion to God, strength of his will.

Teaching Aids to Help You Understand Children's Characteristics

1. *Children's Ministry Resource Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers)
 - Full-page article "Think as Children Think" (page 1452)
 - Chart "Children's Characteristics" (page 1602)
2. Children's Ministries Institute® cefcmi.com
 - Training opportunities

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