



Early Childhood: Six to Eight

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During middle childhood, knowledge, word use, and speech increase greatly. Children are eager to learn and try new things. They enjoy activities that require cooperation as well as those that are competitive.

Physical Development

Physical and motor development is refining. In general, boys will out perform girls in activities that require the use of large muscles. This may include hopping, jumping and riding a bicycle. Girls are typically better at exercises that require use of fine motor skills, or small muscle movement. Coloring, writing, and using scissors are just a few examples.

Language Development

The average 6-year-old has a 10,000 word vocabulary. By the end of the elementary years, it has increased to 40,000. Research shows that people that read more have larger vocabularies. Encouraging children to read is a great way to promote language development and spend quality family time.

Cognitive Development:

Reasoning and Problem Solving

During the school years, children learn problem-solving skills in many subjects. Even though they can put things in sequential or categorical order and follow directions well, they need concrete examples to help them understand ideas and concepts. For example, they understand that 5 apples + 5 apples = 10 apples. However, if

numbers are substituted with letters, $y=mx+b$ for instance, they typically can not solve the problem. The need for concrete and tangible things also is the reason that younger children have difficulty understanding such concepts as death. A parent may tell a child that a deceased grandparent is “sleeping” or in heaven. Many times, the child will say “Let’s wake her up!” or “Let’s go get her!” This happens because if in the past grandma was “sleeping,” she could be aroused and wake up or if she was “away” someone could “go get her.”

Social and Emotional Development: Feelings and Interaction

Children have an increased awareness of and experience with understanding others points of view. They have the ability to imagine what others may be thinking or feeling. They understand and begin to demonstrate fairness and can understand the linkage between rules and social expectations.

Play continues to be very important. Millions of children play on organized teams. Even though the majority of children are involved in competitive extracurricular activities, not all children enjoy competitive team sports. Games and activities that encourage cooperation are welcomed by many. This can include some of the following:

- Board games
- Physical activities
- Building structures
- Arts & Crafts
- Drawing

Quick Facts

- Children prefer to play with peers of the same gender.
- Pressure from school and parents can create stress.
- Children can have depressive symptoms similar to adults.
- It is very important to establish rules and boundaries.
- It is important to consistently enforce rules and give consequences when they are broken.
- Avoid over-scheduling children in too many activities.

References

- Berk, L. (1999). *Infants, Children & Adolescents*. Third Edition. Allyn and Bacon
- Fabes, R., Martin C.L. (2003). *Exploring Child Development*. Second Edition. Allyn and Bacon

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