

Young Children:

What Are They Like?

Without looking at a penny, list as many of its features as you can think of. What are some of its general features? What's on the front? What's on the back? Compare your list to the answers at the bottom of this page.

How can we see something every day and not see its features? Could the same question apply to our children in the classroom? Is it possible to teach children and not know much about them? In this folder, we will look at the stages young children go through in order to know them better.



A Scripture to Think About

"When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child" (1 Corinthians 13:11).

- What does this verse tell you about the differences between a child and an adult?
- Do you remember being a child? Do you remember misunderstanding something because you were thinking with childlike logic?

How to **USE** this Folder



- If you are a teacher, use this folder to learn about or review the characteristics of young children at different ages. If you are a teacher trainer, use this folder as a guide to help you train teachers to know what to expect from children of different ages.
- By the end of the session, you should understand young children better.

Features of a penny: round, copper colored, raised rim, 3/4 inch in diameter, 1/16 inch thick, about 1/6 ounce; front side: "IN GOD WE TRUST," "LIBERTY," date, mint mark, Lincoln's profile facing right; back side: "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA," "E PLURIBUS UNUM," "ONE CENT," Lincoln Memorial.

This folder contains material for multiple teacher training sessions.

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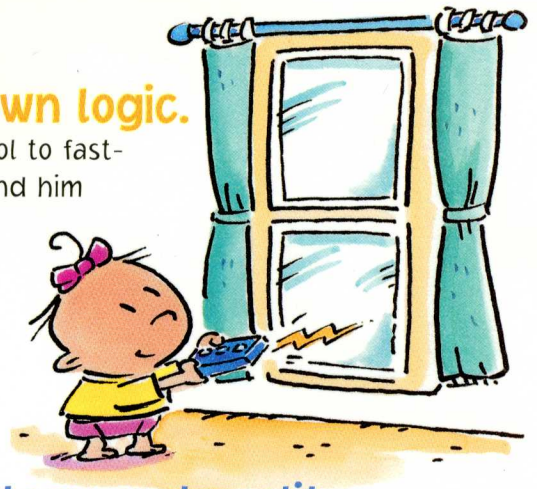
page **7** four year olds

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The Child's-Eye View

1 A child views the world with his own logic.

An eighteen month old was able to use the remote control to fast-forward videos to his favorite parts. One day his mother found him standing in front of the picture window, aiming the remote at it, trying to change the picture outside. **What are some examples from your experience when a young child showed childish logic?**



2 A child's world is a mixture of fantasy and reality.

Popular costumed characters on TV are real to young children. They could come over and play in the backyard. Animals, fruits and vegetables, and even songbooks talk. Imagination is as strong as reality. **What are some examples from your experience when a young child thought fantasy was reality?**

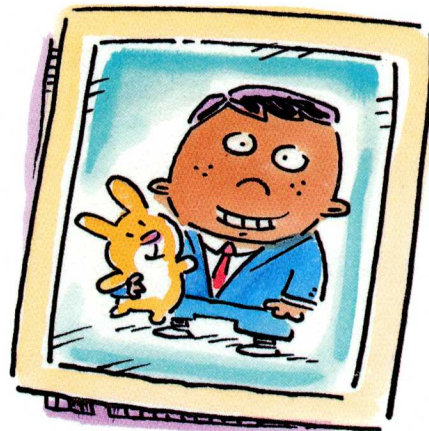


3 A child's world is less inhibited than an adult's.

A young family had to sit in separate sections on an airline flight from Dallas to Nashville. The mother and two-year-old daughter sat at the front of the plane. The father and four-year-old son sat halfway back. When the plane landed, the four year old yelled out, "Hey, Mom! I didn't throw up!" **What are some examples from your experience when a young child showed how uninhibited he was?**

4 A child's world is "now."

Young children don't understand the flow of time. "Long ago" was yesterday at Grandma's house. **What are some examples from your experience that show how a young child views time?**



5 A child's world is self-focused.

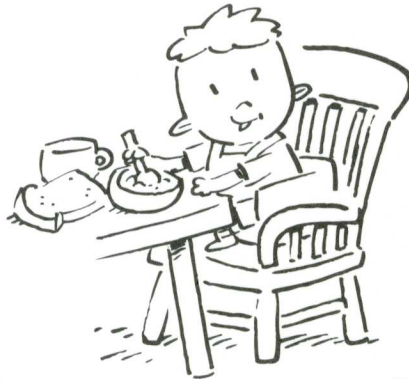
At first, everything revolves around him. He gradually begins to learn that others have needs and feelings like he does. **What are some examples from your experience that show how self-focused a young child is?**

Training Activities

bedtime
playtime
breakfast time
shopping time
nap time
church time
story time
quiet time
dinner time
bath time
potty time
time to clean up
time to get dressed

Time and Place

Piaget said that children associate time with place. For example, when the child hears the word *bedtime*, he thinks of the place where he goes to sleep. Ask the group of teachers and parents to form a circle or a line. Toss a beach ball or a soft spongy ball to someone. As you toss the ball, name a time. The person who catches the ball names the place that the child would associate with that time.



You Are the Expert

On one wall of your room or on one table, place a 4-foot long piece of butcher paper. Label it *Infants*. On another wall or table, place another 4-foot piece of butcher paper labeled *2s and 3s*. On another wall or table, place another 4-foot piece of butcher paper labeled *4s and 5s*. If you have a large group, let 2s, 3s, 4s, and 5s be on four separate pieces of paper.

Divide teachers and parents into three (or more) groups. Each person should go to the group for the age child he teaches, or the age of a child he has at home. Give each group some crayons or markers. Then give the groups 10 to 15 minutes to brainstorm the characteristics of children that age. They write those characteristics on the paper. If you have magazines and/or catalogs with children's pictures in them, teachers/parents can cut out pictures of their age child and glue the pictures onto their mural.

Thought Joggers

There will be variations in the answers to the following questions because of the different personalities of children. But there will be some common, general characteristics among most children of the same age.

What do children this age like to do?
What do they like to listen to?
What do they like to see or watch?
What do they like to eat?
What makes them happy?
What makes them sad?
What makes them afraid?
What makes them angry?

Research information from:

Children: The Early Years, Celia Anita Decker (The Goodheart-Willcox Company)
Life-Span Development, John W. Santrock (William C. Brown)
Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning, James W. Fowler (Harper and Row)
The Discipline Book, William Sears, M.D., and Martha Sears, R.N. (Little, Brown and Company)
A Piaget Primer: How a Child Thinks, Dorothy G. Singer and Tracey A. Revenson (Penguin Books)



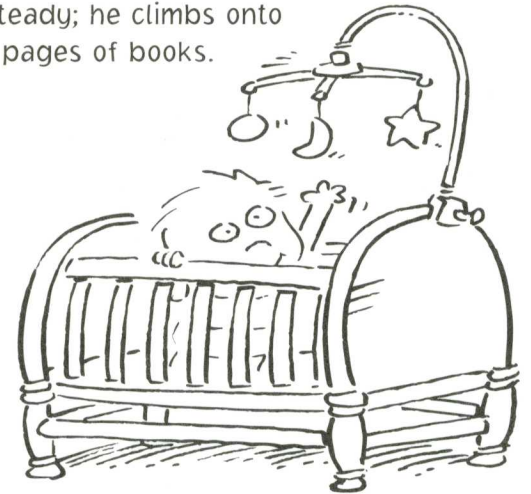
Infancy

Ask a spokesman from the **Infants** group to show their mural and tell what infants are like. Let this group know that they can be the experts on infants, because they are around infants. All they have to do is observe, listen, and interact with the infants.



Physical Development

- The time from birth to age 2 covers a period of fast growth and dramatic changes. The infant grows from reflex reactions to voluntary actions.
- At about 2 months, he can raise his head and chest and hit at objects with his hand.
- At about 4 months, he sits by himself with support and grasps objects.
- At about 7 months, he sits by himself and brings objects to his mouth.
- At about 10 months, he crawls, shows objects he holds to others, stacks objects and drops them into containers.
- At about 12 months, he walks, turns, pulls, and pushes toys.
- At about 12 to 24 months, his walking gets more steady; he climbs onto furniture, holds spoons, crayons, and turns the pages of books.



Mental Development

- The infant learns through the senses: touching, tasting, seeing, hearing, and smelling.
- She starts connecting cause and effect.
- She starts imitating others.
- She moves from cooing to babbling to simple words to two-word sentences.

Social-Emotional Development

- The infant develops TRUST when his caretakers meet his needs or MISTRUST when his needs are not met.
- He watches and follows other children.
- He tries to stay close to the important adults in his life; he has separation anxiety.
- He learns to gauge whether something is right or wrong by the reactions of the important adults in his life.

Spiritual Development

- The infant can learn about God as creator.
- She learns that God is loving and caring.

How can you teach infants that God is a loving, caring creator?



Two Year Olds

Let a spokesperson from the **Two Year Olds** group show their mural and tell what a two year old is like.

Physical Development

The two year old enjoys moving; he squirms and wiggles.
His body growth is slow.
He begins to run and jump.
He learns some self-care skills.
He becomes ready for toilet training.



Mental Development

The two year old learns through her senses.
She learns more vocabulary at this time than at any other.
She begins speaking in multiple-word sentences.
She starts to think about what she does before she does it.
She solves simple problems, such as how to get an object she wants.

Social-Emotional Development

The two year old develops **AUTONOMY**, becoming independent in many ways.
He chooses to spend more time away from adults than he did before.
He confuses fantasy and reality.
He has more fears.
He often exhibits anger when he gets frustrated.
He is possessive; he has a hard time sharing.
He can't always control himself; he needs adult help.



Spiritual Development

The two year old imitates the expressions of faith of important adults in her life: prayer, singing, "reading" the Bible.
She learns about God as creator and provider.
She learns about God's love and care.
She likes simple Bible stories that relate to objects in her world:
Joseph's daddy gave him a coat. I have a coat.

What would you teach two year olds about God and Jesus?
How would you teach two year olds about God and Jesus?
What Bible stories would be appropriate to tell to two year olds?

Three Year Olds

Let a spokesperson from the **Three Year Olds** group show their mural and tell what a three year old is like.

Physical Development

The three year old alternates steps while climbing.
He enjoys spinning around to get dizzy.
He balances a few seconds on one foot.
He builds a tower of blocks.
He pours water.
He copies a circle and draws a straight line.
He unbuttons buttons and pulls big zippers.
He eats with a spoon and fork.



Mental Development

The three year old learns through her senses.
She focuses on parts, not the whole.
She has difficulty putting things in order of size.
She has difficulty understanding time and space.
She believes what adults say.



Social-Emotional Development

The three year old plays side-by-side but not in cooperation with others.
He begins to realize that others have needs, feelings, and rights of their own.
He decides right and wrong by whether he will be rewarded or punished for what he does.
He needs to know the rules and limits.
He must be trained and reminded often.
He is trying to learn when to assert his own will and when to yield his will to obey authority.
He vacillates between the desire to be dependent and the desire to be independent.
He begins learning to be responsible for taking care of things that belong to him.

Spiritual Development

The three year old continues to imitate the faith of important adults in her life.
She may talk about God in human terms and have a mental image of God based on human characteristics.
She does not understand symbolism or abstract concepts.
She learns from simple Bible stories of people who chose to do right, to help, and to obey.
She learns about God as creator and provider.
She learns about God's love and care.
She still enjoys Bible stories and themes that relate to what she experiences and knows in her daily life.

What would you teach three year olds about God and Jesus?

How would you teach three year olds about God and Jesus?

What Bible stories would be appropriate to tell to three year olds?

What themes and concepts would be good to teach to three year olds?

Four Year Olds

Let a spokesperson from the **Four Year Olds** group show their mural and tell what four year olds are like.

Physical Development

The four year old has better eye-hand coordination.
He tries walking different ways: sideways, backward, on tiptoe.
He may start losing baby teeth.
He balances when walking a straight line.
He uses scissors to cut on lines.
He combs his hair, brushes his teeth, and washes his hands.
He can write a few letters.



Mental Development

The four year old learns by doing and using her five senses.
She focuses on one step rather than on a chain of events.
She still has difficulty understanding concepts of space and time.
She uses pretending as a form of play.
She is curious, asking hundreds of questions a day.
She tries many new things, making many mistakes.
She realizes she is growing and will not always be little.
She makes longer sentences when she talks.
She thinks literally and does not understand symbolism or abstracts.



Social-Emotional Development

The four year old develops a sense of INITIATIVE, exploring, examining, and trying new things on his own.
He is impulsive.
He still depends on rules to guide him.
He sees things as all good or all bad, all safe or all dangerous.
He identifies with the values of important people in his life.
He begins to internalize what he has been taught about right and wrong, developing a conscience.
He wants to help in real ways.
He develops more fears, because he sees more to be afraid of.
He cooperates with other children in play (associative play).



Spiritual Development

The four year old doesn't understand or remember the order of Bible stories, because she doesn't understand the flow of time.
She must make a connection between new themes or concepts and concrete things that she already knows.
She is interested in God's greatness, power, and supernatural abilities.
She continues to imitate the expressions of faith of the important people in her life.

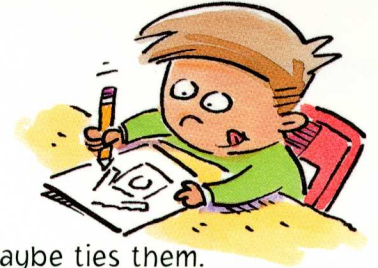
What would you teach four year olds about God and Jesus?
What Bible stories would be appropriate to tell to four year olds?

Five Year Olds

Let a spokesperson from the **Five Year Olds** group show their mural and tell about five year olds.

Physical Development

The five year old runs faster and reacts more quickly.
He may have difficulty hopping in rhythm and skipping.
He shows a preference for his right or left hand.
He draws simple shapes freehand.
He buttons big buttons, zips big zippers, laces shoes and maybe ties them.
He may still be having coordination difficulties with his small muscles.



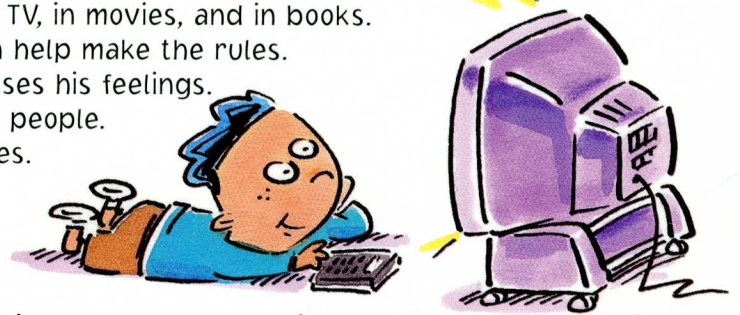
Mental Development

The five year old explores, examines, and experiments.
She thinks she can help teachers and parents do almost anything.
She begins to be able to group objects according to their similarities.
She begins to be able to tell the difference between fantasy and reality.
She needs concrete, sensory experiences to help her draw conclusions and learn concepts.
She uses more complex sentences.
She still has difficulty understanding symbolic and abstract concepts.
She is learning to read and write letters and some words.



Social-Emotional Development

The five year old continues to develop INITIATIVE as he explores the world.
He may ask an adult for help, even though he is wanting to be independent.
He is seeing differences in people and learning to accept those differences.
He may imitate teachers and people on TV, in movies, and in books.
He still needs to know the rules; he can help make the rules.
He is learning to control how he expresses his feelings.
He can play games that involve several people.
He enjoys taking part in real life routines.
He is able to talk about feelings.



Spiritual Development

The five year old continues to identify with the values of the important people in her life.
She continues to imitate the expressions of faith of the important people in her life.
She will be entering a stage in which stories of faith are a great influence in her life:
the stories of the faith of people around her, her own stories of faith, and biblical accounts of faith.



Teacher Training Series **Young Children: What Are They Like?**

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