

Child Development 6-8 Years

Mental Skills

Children:

- Become able to understand the viewpoint of others: are aware that others can have different thoughts
- Can focus on several aspects of a problem at a time
- Can concentrate on what they do for longer periods of time
- Increased problem-solving ability, but not yet like an adult
- Can think of simple plans before acting. For example, when inviting friends over to play, children can plan in advance what games they will play
- Can begin to understand time and the days of the week; by age 8 can place events in time sequence
- Improved short- and long-term memory
- Can speak and also write; by age 8 have a vocabulary of 20,000 words and learn an average of 20 new words a day; can also understand that a word may have different meanings
- Can communicate better and longer with others, express themselves, and understand things.
- Can better understand and internalize moral rules of behavior (right/wrong; good/bad; wonderful/terrible)
- Begin to understand that what is fair is related to merit: who works harder deserves special treat
- Are better able to empathize with other people and accept the idea of giving special consideration to those in greater need

Social Skills

Children:

- Are able to view themselves based on: how they perform in school; capacity to make friends; and their physical appearance
- Understand they can feel two emotions at the same time (I like Jenny but I hate how she talks to me)
- Are intensely interested in peers, prefer same sex friends; develop friendships marked by give and take, mutual trust, and shared experiences

- Feel that belonging and acceptance by peers is very important. (Children may look more for peers than to adults for gratification)
- Play is no longer just fantasy play where imagination is the key element; more often children choose rules-based games where the rules are the key element and winning the game is more frequently the objective
- Have great concern with justice and fairness; what is fair or equal is important and some children may try to get even and become verbally or physically aggressive
- Continue to develop social skills like empathy and compassion
- Become more able to do things by themselves and as a result, their relationship with parents changes

Tips for Parents

- Help your children to develop a sense of competence: give them opportunities to master some skills like cooking, building models, making crafts, playing an instrument
- Learn to gradually share the control of your child's life with your daughter or son
- Reinforce the understanding of right and wrong and consequences
- Teach problem solving to your child. Use the IDEAL model to:
 - Identify the problem and the feelings involved (Your child is being bullied and is afraid of going to school)
 - Determine with the child possible solutions without use of violence
 - Evaluate with the child the merits of each possible solution
 - Act, choosing the best solution
 - Learn from what you and your child did to solve the problem
- Use real-life situations (in your family or make-up a situation) and when you are on the bus, in the car, or in the kitchen, play the IDEAL game with your child. A mock scenario could be: A child can't watch TV because hasn't done homework and she/he is mad and breaks the remote control.
- Reinforce prosocial skills such as sharing, empathy, cooperation by asking a child to do things like help care for a baby, collect food for a shelter.
- Provide opportunities for your child to develop an understanding of rules by playing simple table games that rely on chance rather than on skills such as cards, dominoes, and tic-tac-toe.
- Teach by speaking out loud to yourself (so your child will hear) about a problem and how to resolve it. An example: We are out of milk, bread, and fruits. I'm not feeling well. I will call daddy and ask him to stop by the grocery store on his way home to get them.
- Demonstrate that behaviors and actions have consequences for everybody involved in a situation: If you do that, this will happen or when you do this, then you will get this.