

AGE-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Preschoolers:

Infants:

- Sense love from the way they are treated
- Need to be held securely but not tightly
- Learn through hearing
- Need lots of time and space for exploring
- Need to be treated as individuals
- Respond to loving care at church
- Are learning to trust

A one-year-old:

- Is constantly active, moving from one interest to another
- Learns to reason and think through physical manipulation
- Imitates the activities of the adults around him
- Explores with his five senses – seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling
- Uses the word *no* frequently
- Wants everything now. His understanding is limited, and he cannot wait.
- Is interested in himself. He has little interest in cooperative play
- Is developing attitudes about church.
- Show interest in simple Bible truths, songs, stories, and pictures

A two-year-old:

- Learns best when all five senses are used
- Likes to feel, pound, pat and manipulate objects
- Has a short attention span.
- Listens to a short story, conversation, or song
- Learns by doing and hearing something over and over
- Enjoys holding the Bible and turning pages
- Is beginning to realize that Jesus is a special person

A three-year-old:

- Has a vivid imagination
- Is imitative
- Asks many questions. The first word in each sentence seems to be *why*, *how*, or *what*.
- Has to be told the same thing over and over.
- Learns through senses.
- Is active and seldom still
- Can identify some Bible stories and people
- Understands that God made people, animals, and other things in the world

A four-year-old:

- Is a bundle of energy who needs freedom to move
- Tests her world through explosive behavior
- Needs freedom to experiment yet consistent guidance
- Finds security in the very limits he defies
- Is interested in many areas. Her actions, thoughts, and needs are unpredictable because her interests change often
- Is curious; questions begin with *how* or *what*
- Has a strong desire well verbally
- Delights in new words, name calling, and silly sentences
- Likes to retell stories in her own words
- Enjoys games that allows him to find verses

A five-year-old:

- Is calm, secure, and eager to please
- Relishes adult approval and attention
- Asks “*why*” questions and grasps ideas quickly
- Prints his name with pride, but many encounter problems when he uses scissors
- Enjoys planning projects before attempting them
- Participates in group play, but may sometimes prefer one friend
- Begins to ask questions about God
- Expresses love for God and Jesus

Kindergarteners:

- Can read on varied levels
- Relish adult approval and attention
- Are very creative and imaginative
- Are easily frustrated when projects seem too hard
- Can write on varied levels
- Are used to some structure in the classroom
- Know some basic classroom rules.

Grade Levels:

1st & 2nd Graders:

PHYSICAL: Children need opportunities for movement each day. Small muscle coordination is still developing and improving. Girls are ahead of boys at this stage of development. Children are developing at different rates – be aware of remarks and attitudes that can help or hurt the self-image of a child.

Teaching Tips: Encourage activities that involve cutting and simple writing skills; give alternatives for children who do not write well (e.g., drawing); give children opportunities to vary their activities.

EMOTIONAL: Children are experiencing new and frequently intense feelings as they grow in independence. Sometimes the child finds it hard to control his or her behavior. There is still a deep need for approval from adults and a growing need for approval by peers.

Teaching Tips: Seek opportunities to help each child in your class know and feel you love him or her. Show genuine interest in each child and his or her activities and accomplishments. Learn children's names and use them frequently in positive ways.

SOCIAL: Children are concerned with pleasing their teachers. Each child is struggling to become socially acceptable to the peer group. The Golden Rule is a tough concept at this age. Being first and winning are very important. Taking turns is hard. This skill improves by the end of the 2nd grade. A child's social process move gradually from *I* to *you* to *we*.

Teaching Tips: Provide opportunities for children to practice taking turns. Help each child accept the opinions and wishes of others and consider the welfare of the group as well as his or her own. Call attention to times when the group cooperates successfully.

INTELLECTUAL: There is an intense eagerness to learn and children of this age ask lots of questions. They like to repeat stories and activities. The concept of time is limited. Thinking is here and now rather than past or future. Listening and speaking skills are developing rapidly; girls are ahead of boys. Each child thinks everyone shares his or her view. Children see parts rather than how the parts make up the whole and they think very literally.

Teaching Tips: Consider the skill and ability levels of the children in accomplishing activities. For example, some can handle listening and writing activities and others may do better with music or art. Use pictures to help them understand Bible times and people.
Avoid Symbolism!!!

SPIRITUAL: Children can sense the greatness, wonder and love of God when helped with visual and specific examples. The non-physical nature of God is baffling, but God's presence in every area of life is generally accepted when parents and teachers communicate this belief by their attitudes and actions. Children can think of Jesus as a Friend, but they need specific examples of how Jesus expresses love and care. This understanding leads many children to belief and acceptance of Jesus as personal Savior. Children can comprehend talking to God anywhere, anytime, in their own words and need regular opportunities to pray. They can also comprehend that the Old Testament tells what happened before Jesus was born and the New Testament tells of His birth, work on earth, return to heaven and the works that occurred afterwards on earth.

Teaching Tips: The gospel becomes real as children feel love from adults. Teachers who demonstrate their faith in a consistent, loving way are models through which the loving nature of God is made known to children.

3rd & 4th Graders:

PHYSICAL: Children at this level have good large and small muscled coordination. The girls are still ahead of the boys. Children can work diligently for longer periods but can become impatient with delays or their own imperfect abilities. Children are developing at different rates – be award of remarks and attitudes that can help or hurt the self-image of a child.

Teaching Tips: Give clear, specific instructions and allow the children as much independence as possible in preparing materials. Assign children the responsibility for cleanup.

EMOTIONAL: This is the age of teasing, nicknames, criticism and increased verbal skills to vent anger. At eight years children have developed a sense of fair play and a value system of right and wrong. At nine years children are searching for identity beyond membership in the family unit.

Teaching Tips: Here is marvelous opportunity for the teacher to present a Christian model at the time children are eagerly searching for models! Provide experiences that encourage children's creativity and self-concept. Let all the children know both verbally and by your actions that "love is spoken to her" – that you will not let others hurt them or let them hurt others. Make your class a safe place to be.

SOCIAL: Children's desire for status within the peer group becomes more intense. Most children remain shy with strangers and exhibit strong preferences for being with a few close friends. Some children still lack essential social skills needed to make and retain friendships.

Teaching Tips: This age is a good time to use activities in which pairs or small groups of children can work together. Create opportunities for each child to assume increased responsibilities.

INTELLECTUAL: Children are beginning to realize there may be valid opinions besides their own. They are becoming able to evaluate alternatives are less likely than before to fasten onto one viewpoint as the only on possible. Children are also beginning to think in terms of "the whole." Children think more conceptually and have a high level of creativity. By this stage, however, many children have become self-conscious about their creative efforts as their understanding has grown to exceed their abilities in some areas.

Teaching Tips: Encourage children to look up information and discover their own answers to problems. Activities such as art, music, and drama help children learn Bible information and concepts. Encourage children to use their Bibles by finding and reading portions of Scripture. Bible learning games are good for this age; these are also good years for Bible memory work. Help children understand the meaning of the verses they memorize.

SPIRITUAL: Children are open to sensing the need for God's continuous help and guidance. They can recognize the need for a personal Savior. There may be a desire to become a member of God's family. Children who indicate an awareness of sin and concern about accepting Jesus as Savior need careful guidance without pressure.

Teaching Tips: Give children opportunities to communicate with God through prayer. Help them understand the forgiving nature of God. Talk personally with a child whom you sense the Holy Spirit is leading to trust Lord Jesus. Ask simple questions to determine the child's level of understanding.

5th & 6th graders:

PHYSICAL: Children have mastered most basic physical skills, are active and curious and seek a variety of new experiences. Rapid growth can cause some 11-year-olds to tire easily. Children are developing at different rates – be aware of remarks and attitudes that can help or hurt the self-image of a child.

Teaching Tips: Ten-year-old boys will still participate in activities with girls, but by 11 years they tend to work and play better with their own sex. This is a good age for exploration and research activities. Use active, creative ways to memorize Bible verses.

EMOTIONAL: Children are usually cooperative, easygoing, content, friendly, and agreeable. Most adults enjoy working with this age group. Even though both girls and boys begin to think about their future as adults, their interests tend to differ significantly. Be aware of behavioral changes that result from the 11-year-olds' emotional growth. Children are experiencing unsteady emotions and often shift from one mood to another.

Teaching Tips: Changes of feelings require patient understanding from adults. Give many opportunities to make choices with only a few necessary limits. Take time to listen as children share their experiences and problems with you.

SOCIAL: Friendships and activities with their peers flourish. Children draw away from adults in the desire for independence. This child wants to be a part of a same-sex group and usually does not want to stand alone in competition.

Teaching Tips: Children no longer think aloud, so keeping communication open is of prime importance. Listen, ask questions and avoid being judgmental.

INTELLECTUAL: Children of this age are verbal! Making ethical decisions becomes a challenging task. They are able to express ideas and feelings in a creative way. By 11 years children have begun to reason abstractly. They begin to think of themselves as adults and at the same time question adult concepts. Hero worship is strong.

Teaching Tips: Include lots of opportunities for talking, questioning and discussing in a safe, accepting environment. These are good years for poetry, songs, drama, stories, drawing and painting. Give guidance in a way that does not damage children's effort in becoming thinking, self-directed people.

SPIRITUAL: Children can have deep feelings of love for God, can share the good news of Jesus with a friend and are capable of involvement in evangelism and service projects. The child may seek guidance from God to make everyday and long-range decisions.

Teaching Tips: Provide opportunities for children to make choices and decisions based on Bible concepts. Plan prayer, Bible reading and worship experiences. Involve children in work and service projects.