



UConn
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE,
HEALTH AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

EXTENSION

UConn 4-H Fact Sheet

Ages and Stages

WHY ARE AGES & STAGES IMPORTANT?

This fact sheet is intended to help you gain insight into the needs and interests of your 4-H club members. The grid on the reverse discusses characteristics common to youngsters at each developmental level. With the aid of this information, you can help 4-H'ers have challenging experiences that will contribute to their growth and development. Keep in mind that no two individuals develop at the same pace and that transitions are gradual over time. A 4-H'er may seem very responsible and mature at one meeting, then noisy and bored at the next.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOUR STAGES

There are some characteristics that children share at certain stages of life. The term *developmental characteristics* is used to describe how children think and act at a certain age. These characteristics are described in four areas:

- **Physical**— Focuses on the growth and maturity of their bodies.
- **Social**— Focuses on how children interact with others and respond in social settings.
- **Emotional**— Focuses on how they deal with their feelings and express those feelings to others.
- **Intellectual**— Focuses on how children think and learn.

School-aged youth are grouped into four developmental age groups:

- Early childhood (5-8) (UConn 4-H Explorers)
- Middle childhood (9-11) (4-H Juniors)
- Early Adolescents (12-14) (4-H Intermediates)
- Adolescents (15-18) (4-H Seniors)

By knowing the characteristics of each age group, it is easier to plan and teach in a way that will work best for that age group. It also makes it easier for you, as Leader, to adapt activities for the range of youth in your club.

THINGS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR CLUB

Size: Adapt the number of items the learners are expected to learn or complete

Time: Adapt the minutes, hours, or days you allow for completion

Input: Adapt the way information is delivered

Output: Adapt the way the learners can respond to instruction

Difficulty: Adapt the problem type

Participation: Adapt the extent the participants are actively involved

Level of support: Increase adult support or peer support as needed

Alternate goal: Adapt outcome expectations while using the same materials.

Characteristic	(Explorers) grades K-1	Beginners Grades 2-5	Intermediates Grades 6-8	Advanced Grades 9-12
Interest Span	Short, unless topic is of great interest. Can be increased if activity is included. (5-20 minutes)	Short and Carried. (45 minutes) Easily motivated.	Lengthens with experience and interest in subject or activity.	Almost adult – is self-motivated.
Motor Skills	May be easily frustrated by fine motor tasks that are beyond level of coordination.	High interest in doing active projects. Poor communication.	Interested in skills for specific use. Can tackle more difficult jobs with more complex coordination.	Highly skilled in areas of interest and practice.
Mental Growth	Curious, learns from hands-on experience. Developing language. Competitive activities not appropriate. Don't accept failure.	High Curiosity, limited experience. Beginning abstract learning. Needs recognition.	Increased depth and scope of learning. Want to make decisions but still depend on adult guidelines.	Continued increase related to experience. Can see relationships.
Ability to Plan	Has difficulty with multiple step plans over a period of time.	Limited ability, experience, and judgment.	Can plan better than execute. Can discuss current events, international affairs, and social issues with help.	Has need and ability to plan, Enjoy discussing world situations.
Relation to Adults	Seeks adult leadership and companionship.	Accepts leadership easily from adults. Admire and imitate older youth.	Needs and wants guidance but rejects domination.	Wants leadership on an adult level.
Relation to Age	More interested in small groups, members of same sex, and under adult supervision. May have several best friends.	Needs to feel accepted. Show loyalty to members of the same sex and antagonism to opposite sex.	Interest in opposite sex, and in group acceptance. Can be self-conscious.	High interest in groups, "couples" oriented. Strong desire for status in peer group. High interest in social activity.

Helpful links and information

Positive Youth Development

youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development

Stages of Adolescent Development

www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_stages_0504.cfm

UConn 4-H Website

s.uconn.edu/4-h

County Contacts:

s.uconn.edu/4-h/connect

4-H Enrollment:

<https://4h.zsuite.org/>

4-H Volunteer information:

s.uconn.edu/4-h/becoming-a-volunteer

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