



# DISCOVERY



Facilitating the Healthy  
Development of Children

7-11 YEARS



# DISCOVERY

## Stages of Development for Children 7-11 Years

As children reach the age of seven years they begin the “middle childhood” years often associated with rapid progress in all developmental and skill areas.

The tasks of middle childhood are:

1. acquiring social and physical skills necessary for ordinary games
2. learning to get along with peers
3. building a wholesome concept of self
4. learning about sexuality
5. developing fundamental skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic
6. breaking family ties and developing a growing independence by entering school
7. developing conscience, morality and a value judgement system

Late childhood years are characterized by the continued practice of those tasks learned in middle childhood.

The necessary level of understanding and learning are:

1. learning to become self reliant
2. developing and maintaining friendships with peers
3. gaining a perspective of one’s peer group role
4. developing a moral code of conduct
5. a growing understanding of self and the world

# Contents

## **Ages 7 to 8**

Language (Behaviours & Activities)	4
Motor/Physical Development (Behaviours & Activities)	5
Cognitive Development (Behaviours & Activities)	6 -7
Social/Emotional Development (Behaviours & Activities)	8

## **Ages 9 to 11**

Language Development (Behaviours & Activities)	10
Motor/Physical Development (Behaviours & Activities)	11
Cognitive Development (Behaviours & Activities)	12
Social/Emotional Development (Behaviours & Activities)	13
Bibliography	14

# Behaviours & Activities for Children

# 7-8 YEARS

## Language Development

### BEHAVIOURS

Seven-eight year olds are curious asking: Why? What for? How? questions. They are beginning to understand objects, actions and events serve purposes.

Abstract thinking is beginning.

Verbal understanding increases and the child can communicate his own thoughts more objectively.

### ACTIVITIES

Provide opportunities for children to problem-solve. Listen and facilitate learning, provide ideas for further discovery.

Provide opportunities for children to create activities, games, stories that stretch their imagination and test ideas.

Ensure that the child is part of the decision-making process.



## Motor/Physical Development

### BEHAVIOURS

Middle childhood is characterized by slow and steady physical growth. Active play is most characteristic and children will become more fatigued by sitting for long periods than by physically moving.

Children begin to lose their baby teeth. Permanent teeth continue to arrive until 11 or 12 years.

The eyes are still immature in size and shape with a tendency towards farsightedness which corrects itself by age 8-10 years.

Children begin to understand consequences of actions and try various solutions.

Begin cursive writing; prefer the use of a pencil to a crayon.

Will play vigorously in one activity but will quickly drop it for another.

Children enjoy active games and team sports with an emphasis on skill development and lots of opportunity to practice. They understand and accept rules but will change them depending on the group. There is a belief in fair play.

### ACTIVITIES

Skipping, running, jumping, cycling, will assist in development and practice of new skills.

Regular dental visits will ensure the healthy development of new teeth coming in.

Provide large print books which are easier to read. Provide opportunities for children to practice reading.

Provide activities for children that require problem-solving and teamwork. Allow children time to learn skills and practice them.

Practice cursive writing by introducing journals, signing in for activities.

Provide a variety of activities where the number of participants vary from solitary to team and the skill level changes to include endurance, agility, concentration, coordination and movement.

Games and sports should focus on enjoyment rather than winning. Everyone should have an opportunity to play.

# Behaviours & Activities for Children

## 7-8 YEARS

### Cognitive Development

#### BEHAVIOURS

Begins to learn the relationship of money and work.

Understands the concept of time and space.

Child realizes that other people see things differently than him.

Beginning to understand that nature has purpose, i.e. the sun for warmth.

Learns best in concrete terms.

Prefers to participate rather than to be just a spectator.

Memory is increasing.

Likes field trips and questions all they see. Likes to talk about the past, history, far off places and ways of communication.

#### ACTIVITIES

Introduce an allowance based on family values. Introduce philanthropy and philanthropic activities.

Outlining the time available to complete tasks will allow children the ability to plan activities to ensure they accomplish what they want to do.

Provide opportunities for group discussions where children can practice problem solving and listening to other points of view.

Provide science activities where children can practice their learning, i.e. planting seeds, starting a terrarium.

Introduce new activities using props to increase understanding. Demonstrate an activity providing opportunities for children to practice individually before moving into groups or teams.

Provide activities where all children can participate and the waiting time is limited.

Several directions can be given to children with successful follow through.

Provide information prior to an excursion, allow children time to research, then be available to answer questions or have group discussions. Introduce projects that include children researching and discovering. If children in the group speak other languages have them teach their peers.



## Cognitive Development

### BEHAVIOURS

Developing a sense of moral judgement, right and wrong. Developing confidence and feelings of self-worth with a growing awareness and acceptance of strengths and short comings.

The child learns some degree of self control. Learns to live and cope with frustration.

Allow opportunities for child to plan and implement daily activities.

Encourage feedback about outcomes.

Be aware of obsessive concern regarding appearance, particularly weight.

The child is able to envision a concept of self regarding particular physical, social and emotional characteristics. Focus on health and healthy lifestyle. A positive self-concept enables a person to feel good about themselves leading to self-respect and increased self-confidence.

### ACTIVITIES

Create rules that have been agreed to by the group with a clear understanding of consequences.

Acknowledge the accomplishment or task with positive reinforcement and encouragement. Avoid negative labels.

Independence increases as they make friends away from home, become interested in external events and experiences, and begin to want decision-making capabilities in keeping with what they learn other children have.

The personality of the child is affected by people and how they react to him.

Praise, encouragement and positive reinforcement.

# Behaviours & Activities for Children

# 7-8 YEARS

## Social/Emotional Development

### BEHAVIOURS

Peers take on greater importance and are typically same-sex "best friends". The peer group begins to influence the child's behaviour and growth.

Sex roles will begin to influence play

Curiosity arises about the differences between the sexes.

Conflicts are generally settled verbally.

Beginning to be self-critical and likes to do things well.

Likes to assume some responsibility.

Very talkative, using language to direct, report, reason, and speculate.

Children will play fairly well with others but will spend some time in solitary activity.

Gets along well with his parents but better with his friends.

### ACTIVITIES

Allow opportunities for group work, problem-solving, sharing ideas, and roles (leading, following, listening). Provide activities for children to participate together, choosing their own groups.

Provide variety in dramatic activities; include puppetry, mime, roleplaying, improvisation, having the children direct the activity.

Questions should be answered truthfully but not in great detail.

When conflict arises, allow children time to listen to one another's point of view and reach a mutually agreeable solution.

Activities should place emphasis on participation, skill development and fair play ensuring all children feel good about their accomplishments.

Provide opportunities for children to demonstrate responsibility. Mentoring programs, singing in/out, setting up/taking down activities, a variety of chores at home, are some ideas.

Allow opportunities for the children to express themselves and share their thoughts. Encourage the children by providing feedback and facilitating group discussions.

Balance group and solitary play activities by providing opportunities and choice.

Parents and adults are still considered the authority. Rules and guidelines should be developed with the children's participation demonstrating respect for the child's opinion while maintaining safety and values.

# Behaviours & Activities for Children 9-11 YEARS

## Language Development

### BEHAVIOURS

Can listen critically (detects flaws in reasoning of others, questions validity of conclusions, evaluates).

Can appreciate the values and feelings expressed through prose, poetry and music.

Ability to argue increases with ability to take another point of view.

Sentences become more complex – uses when, if, because, and since, more frequently – can consciously appraise and improve own speech habits.

Much more aware of choosing words to share feeling.

Rate of silent reading increases and surpasses rate of speech – oral reading may become difficult because of this.

### ACTIVITIES

Provide time for discussion and “debriefing” experiences.

Provide opportunities to express reactions to art forms. Stories that take place in different time periods are helpful for creative outlets.

Provide creative opportunities to examine other sides of an issue – helpful during group conflict.

Provide opportunity for self-evaluation and “cause and effect” discussions – useful when dealing with results of individual or group actions (on feelings for example).

Talk about the “weight” of such things as compliments (or putdowns).

Be patient and explain the natural process that is occurring. Be sensitive to situations which might be very uncomfortable.



## Motor/Physical Development

### BEHAVIOURS

Tremendous energy consumed (often hungry).  
May give little thought to other body needs except when hurt or tired.

Body growth slows down until just before puberty when it accelerates (ages 10-11).

Girls are 12-15 months ahead in development.

Right/left dominance established and manipulative skills increase.

Hand/eye coordination well-developed – now children are ready for skill-building.

Late in phase boys and girls may be very fidgety, squirmy.

Generally very healthy.

### ACTIVITIES

Be very careful to ensure that proactive health measures are taken (eating, liquids, sunscreen).  
Ask for feedback often.

Be aware that children may be unsure of what is happening to them – offer support and explanation that different and changing rate of growth are natural.

Be sensitive to changing peer relations as physical changes create differences – talk about natural differentiation in development.

Introduce games and activities which give practice in fine motor skills.

Begin introducing activities and skills requiring more complex movements and thought patterns.

Be sensitive to activity length and amount of variety in format.

# Behaviours & Activities for Children

# 9-11 YEARS

## Cognitive Development

### BEHAVIOURS

Beginning to distinguish differences between private and public life (realizes privacy of own thoughts).

Shows an understanding of reason/consequence.

Ability to argue increases with ability to take another point of view.

Able to sort and organize ideas as well as objects.

Can conduct more complex, controlled experiments because of ability to deal with an increasing number of variables.

Early in phase may have some difficulty distinguishing between own ideas (based on personal perception) and fact (based on reason).

Makes and carries out plans.

Understands change, e.g. can reason about adaptation to environment and interdependence of living things.

Can use models, graphs, and symbols to solve problems.

### ACTIVITIES

Can begin to talk about the meaning of personal values and conflict with peer norms.

Debriefing "negative" group experiences through examination of cause and effect rather than focusing on the people involved.

Provide opportunities to discuss ideas and examine issues.

Provide activities involving classification and healthy debate.

Revisit routine things while making observations – make finding cause and effect a game.

Help group set clear ground rules during "brainstorming" to ensure that creative ideas are not "shot down" – allow a group centred process for eventual evaluation based on reason.

Give group challenges, initiatives, or project.

Begin to give opportunities for children to see changes and learn about natural processes.

Encourage making written plan using maps for exploration and diagramming ideas.



## Social/Emotional Development

### BEHAVIOURS

- Is eager, enthusiastic, and anxious to win.
- Is developing perseverance – but interests may be short-lived.
- Is interested in finding out how things work (by examining and manipulating).
- Is becoming more skilled at evaluating own ideas.
- Begins to doubt and become sensitive about self.
- Is learning about individuality through peers – by end of this phase physical changes may cause outbursts, fighting, and tears.
- Gang spirit and influence strong – wants to be like others.
- Looked up to by younger children.
- Activities organized and own rules developed – realizes need for cooperation and mutual understanding.

### ACTIVITIES

- Channel competitive energy into activities which require the group to “win” without an individual or another group “losing”.
- Praise small victories and slowly build up to larger (or more complex) goals.
- Provide tools for creative exploration of the environment.
- Encourage “brainstorming” and creative problem-solving.
- Provide activities which illustrate the benefits of people with different skills.
- Ensure activities provide for success regardless of physical stage. Games emphasizing precise coordination can hurt self-esteem.
- Emphasize the responsibility that comes with the freedom to make choices.
- Provide opportunities for leadership.
- Facilitate groups through processes which encourage positive group decision and norm making.

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**Vision:** The YMCA of Greater Toronto will focus on making connections: connecting people, connecting with youth, and connecting with the community.

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