

As children reach the age of 10, many will start to think of themselves as being almost teenagers. But, it's not always the case. While some will start looking and acting more mature, others will remain more child-like, both physically and emotionally.

Being 10 is all about change. It is a period of transition that can offer challenges and delights as children start to embrace the approach of adolescence.

## **Physical Development**

Many children will start to experience major growth spurts by the time reach the fifth grade. Girls tend to grow at a faster pace and may suddenly find themselves towering over boys the same age.<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, many 10-year-old boys may only just beginning to show the [signs of puberty](#), while others will have to wait until they are 11, [12](#), or even [13](#). This disparity in growth can create discomfort in many children, either because they are growing too fast or not fast enough.

### Key Milestones

- Demonstrates improved agility, speed, coordination, and balance
- Begins to show signs of puberty such as oily skin, increased sweating and hair growth in the genital area and under the arms
- Experiences an increase in small muscle coordination.

## **Emotional Development**

At 10 years of age, children are developing a better sense of who they are in the world. Many are preparing for the start of middle or junior high school and are getting ready to navigate new social settings.

For girls, who generally develop physically at a faster rate and enter puberty earlier than boys, the transition into adolescence can trigger a host of emotions: excitement, uncertainty, trepidation, and even embarrassment.

At age 10, you can expect your child to have more control over emotions and may see her becoming more skilled at handling conflict and negotiating solutions with friends.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, you may see some volatility in her emotions.

Another factor that can play a role in mood swings is the [stress](#) that a typical 10-year-old may be under as she tries to deal with all the physical changes and other shifts in her life.<sup>3</sup> A 10-year-old child may be trying to keep up with ever-more difficult school work, working to fit in and socialize with friends, and dealing with the physical changes of growing up.

### Key Milestones

- Admires and imitates older youth
- Beginning to question authority
- Are accepting of parent/family beliefs

## **Social Development**

Ten-year-old girls cope with cliques, as an insider, an outsider, or both, on a daily basis. At ten, girls may become possessive of their [friends](#) and can be jealous of one another.<sup>4</sup>

Ten-year-old boys may have an easier time with friendships. Boys' relationships tend to be based on mutual interests rather than close, personal feelings.

Ten-year-olds have good ability to sense the emotions of others and to read facial and body language. At ten, acceptance by the peer group is a critical step that seems to have a strong effect on the next level of development.<sup>5</sup> Poor peer acceptance at age ten is a strong predictor of behavioral and emotional problems in adolescence.

Ten-year-olds do feel very close to their parents, siblings, and extended family. They may have frequent squabbles with siblings, fighting especially with younger siblings.

Peer pressure can play a big role in social relationships of most 10-year-olds. At this age, kids will be eager to fit in by wearing the right clothes, listening to the right music, or liking and disliking the same things.

### Key Milestones

- Enjoys creating secret codes and passwords with their friends
- Identifies with individuals of the same gender
- Prefers to work in groups and enjoys cooperative activities

## **Cognitive Development**

Parents may notice that around 10 years old, children start thinking and sounding almost “grown-up.” Children this age are on the cusp of adolescence and have the language skills and [cognitive ability](#) to gather information and formulate well-organized opinions and thoughts.<sup>6</sup> As such, many 10-year-old children can be pleasant company at dinner and at social gatherings, capable of expressing their thoughts on current events, books, music, art, and other subjects.

For many children, the development phase around 10 years old is packed with learning and rapid-paced cognitive growth. Learning accelerates significantly in [fifth grade](#) as children prepare for the middle-school years. It is in fifth and sixth grade that kids begin to tackle more complicated materials in math, reading and other subjects.

In math, fifth graders can be expected to work with fractions, hone multiplication and division skills, and learn more complex geometry concepts. You can expect your [fifth grader to learn](#) concepts such as symmetry of shapes, how to use formulas to calculate the area and volume of shapes, and possibly begin early algebra. Your 10-year-old will start to practice more mental math skills and will be increasingly more able to use logic and abstract thinking to solve verbal math problems.<sup>6</sup>

When studying other subjects, such as history or [social studies](#), 10-year-old children will expand their research skills and use resources such as library books and websites for school projects and presentations. Eager-to-learn fifth graders will delight not only in assembling their research but will also enjoy crafting their thoughts and having people appreciate their work.

Your 10-year-old will be transitioning toward greater independence in managing and organizing school work and homework, requiring less supervision from parents.

## **Speech & Language**

At this stage, reading skills move toward reading and enjoying more complex and lengthier chapter books. They may learn concepts such as metaphors and similes and will continue to encounter more difficult vocabulary words. They will be able to analyze stories, offer criticism. Their ability to think logically will become more pronounced. They will be able to write persuasive essays and argue viewpoints and opinions with more confidence and organization.<sup>7</sup>

## **Play**

Many 10-year-olds love to run, bicycle, skate, and play sports. They may enjoy team sports or individual activities.

They follow their favorite sports teams and know all the details of their favorite TV programs. They are also beginning to be aware of popular singers and groups as well as their favorite celebrities.

Many 10-year-olds enjoy electronics. They are often interested in taking pictures with digital cameras or they may enjoy playing video games.

### Key Milestones

- Learning to use good judgment
- Shows interest in sports teams or pop culture
- Have an increased attention span and can often spend long periods of time working on activities they enjoy