



By age 18, many teens are feeling a combination of excitement and fear about the future. There are a lot of decisions about life after graduation and 18-year-olds invest a lot of time into thinking about what type of life they want once they're on their own.

Teens who have plenty of life skills often feel ready to move out of the home and begin the next chapter. But those who experience a lot of self-doubt may regress a bit as they think about entering the next phase of their lives.

## Physical Development

By age 18, both boys and girls have physically matured. Puberty is over and they've usually reached their full height.

Boys may continue to grow a little more facial hair and their voices may still change a bit more, but otherwise, they're living in adult bodies.

Many teens grow more comfortable with their bodies as they've had some time to adjust to the rapid changes they experienced during the earlier teen years.

### Key Milestones

- Growth has tapered or ended completely
- Less preoccupation with body changes
- Have reached sexual maturity

## Emotional Development

Eighteen-year-olds are beginning to figure out where they will fit into the adult world. It is a time for big changes that comes with a lot of freedom and happiness, along with feelings of nostalgia and apprehension.

Most 18-year-olds are more comfortable seeking advice from older people and their parents again. They realize that they need some guidance and help to navigate the adult world and they're more open to feedback than they were during their younger teen years.

They have much better control over their emotions by this age. And most 18-year-olds are equipped to deal with a wide variety of emotions.

The fear of the future—as well as the [fear of failure](#)—can still be problems, however. Some 18-year-olds will begin to resolve these issues successfully, while others will continue to struggle well into their adult lives.

### Key Milestones

- More comfortable seeking adult advice
- Accepts adult responsibilities
- Able to manage emotions in a socially acceptable manner

## Social Development

Most 18-year-olds have had intimate relationships. They have a better understanding and awareness of their [sexuality](#) at this age.

Peer groups have less of a pull on 18-year-olds. They're better able to evaluate their opinions without adopting the same ideas as everyone around them. Many of them take strong stances on social issues.

They have an emerging ability to make independent [decisions](#) and to compromise. This serves them well as they are forming new [friendships](#) and intimate relationships.

While most of them aren't ready to settle with a partner, many of them are beginning to think about what they want in a future mate.

### Key Milestones

- Able to evaluate their own opinions instead of going along with the crowd
- Intimate relationships are important
- Accepts adult responsibilities

## Cognitive Development

By age 18, teens exhibit a lot of adult-like thinking (even though their brains are yet done developing).

They can think abstractly and they're often future-oriented. They're able to understand, plan, and pursue long-range goals.

They often show a lot of concern for the future. They may feel overwhelmed at times when people ask them what they're doing to with their lives.

Many of them are philosophical and idealistic as well. They have a greater capacity to use insight, however.

### Speech & Language

Most 18-year-olds speak differently to their peers than they do their family or teachers. They may use a fair amount of slang and they're usually adept at using [social media acronyms](#).

The teens who read the most are likely to have the most expansive vocabularies. By now, they're able to communicate like other adults.

### Play

Most 18-year-olds enjoy spending time and talking with their friends. They often have similar hobbies and interests as other adults.

### Key Milestones

- Makes future plans
- Sets long-term goals
- Able to make their own schedule and plans