

Six to Seven Years

Developmental Tasks

Learning to distinguish between reality and fantasy

Becoming comfortable with personal sexual identity

Learning to make connections and distinctions between feelings, thoughts, and actions

Learning to solve problems by initiating and creating



What's Happening in the Brain?

During this stage, the child's brain:

- ❖ Continues refinement linked to motor skills, which leads to better handwriting
- ❖ Expands its capacity for "working memory," meaning short-term memories are made and are accessible for recall (this helps with reading, among other things)
- ❖ Intensifies its focus on concrete thinking as children shift from make-believe play to real-world concerns

Domains

Physical	Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
	Is vigorous, full of energy, and generally restless (foot tapping, wiggling, inability to sit still)	Provide opportunities for a variety of physical activities.
	Has growth spurts; may be clumsy due to poor coordination and/or be in an "ugly duckling" stage	Don't point out or emphasize clumsiness or changes in appearance.
	May occasionally wet or soil him/herself when upset or excited	Accept accidents calmly and avoid embarrassing the child.

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Physical

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
Has marked awareness of sexual differences; may want to look at bodies of opposite sex (“playing doctor,” “playing house,” etc.); touches and plays with genitals less frequently; will accept the idea that a baby grows in the womb	Calmly give simple, honest answers to any questions.
Has unpredictable preferences and strong refusals; often develops a passion for peanut butter	Provide balanced meals, but don't be overly concerned with child's preferences or passions.
Eats with fingers and talks with mouth full	Don't overreact; set a good example.
Suffers more colds, sore throats, and other illnesses (common because of exposure at school)	Be aware of disease symptoms, and remember that crankiness may precede an illness; provide plenty of rest and balanced meals.

Emotional

Feels insecure as a result of a drive toward independence	Provide adequate time, opportunities, and freedom to practice being independent.
Finds it difficult to accept criticism, blame, or punishment	Be patient and understanding.
Is center of own world and tends to be boastful	Accept apparent selfishness as common at this stage.
Is generally rigid, negative, demanding, unadaptable, and slow to respond; exhibits violent extremes, with tantrums reappearing	Set reasonable limits, provide suitable explanations for them, and help the child keep within the limits.
Often makes accusations that others are “cheating” (when not the winner at games, etc.)	Discourage games that designate a winner and provide alternate activities.

Social

Typical Characteristics	Suggested Behaviors for Effective Parenting
May blame mother for anything that goes wrong (boys identifying strongly with father)	Provide consistent, caring responses to child's blame or over-identification with any caregiver.
Doesn't like being kissed in public (especially boys)	Be sensitive about preferences and act accordingly.
Identifies with adults outside the family (teacher, neighbors, etc.)	Accept such identification as part of normal development.
May have unstable friendships and be unkind to peers; is a tattletale	Provide guidance with regard to making and keeping friends.
Must be "the winner," and may "change the rules" to fit own needs; may have no group loyalty	Help him/her to be a good loser.
May develop problems in school if expectations are too high; has trouble concentrating; may fool around, whisper, or bother other children	Keep in touch with the school, and be alert for feelings of frustration and failure in the child.
Mealtimes may become difficult because perpetual activity, with breakfast commonly the most difficult meal	Allow extra time for breakfast.

Mental

The child's brain is "like a sponge"	If at all possible, support learning a second language. Also support memorization, recall, and number problems by helping the child learn his or her phone number and address.
May develop stuttering, especially when under stress	Remember that language disturbances are temporary and may disappear of their own accord.
Wants "all of everything" and finds it difficult to make choices	Provide opportunities for making decisions, but limit choices to two or three.
Begins to have organized, continuous memories; most children learn to read and write (although some do not until after age seven)	Promote reading and writing (encourage letters to relatives and friends, provide opportunities to create stories, etc.).

Typical Characteristics**Suggested Behaviors
for Effective Parenting**

Is very concerned with personal behavior, particularly as it affects family and friends; sometimes blames others for own wrongdoings

Teach the child to be concerned and responsible for personal behavior(s), and assure the child that everyone makes mistakes.

Indicators Related to Developmental Lag or Potential Trauma

Excessive fears (especially of adults and strangers) and/or extreme separation anxiety

Shyness and/or lack of interest in others; not playing

Threatening or bullying peers

Excessively repetitive behaviors (especially around food)

Persistent speech problems

Bedwetting; toileting problems

Persistent concern for safety, including self and others

Extreme difficulty concentrating in school

Reversion to younger behaviors, emotional swings, attention seeking