

6-8 Years

The Development of Language and Conceptual Abilities in Children

What the typical child might say and do:	What the typical child knows or thinks:	What you should say or do:	Cautions:
<p>Experiences a rapid increase in vocabulary and may reach 20,000 words by age 8</p> <p>Structures sentences much as adults do, following standard conventions of grammar</p> <p>Uses concrete word definitions</p> <p>Tattletales, boasts, and mixes fantasy with fact to fulfill wishes (When trying to make friends with another child, a child with no ponies may say “I have two ponies and my mother says you can come and live with me and ride my ponies.”)</p> <p>Complains; can be very negative, demanding, and judgmental (“That’s not fair!”)</p>	<p>Makes the transition from childhood “magical” thinking to reasoned thinking based on a concrete, fact-based understanding of the world</p> <p>Learns to tell time and can identify day of week, and month of year</p> <p>Can give temporal information about symptoms or events (such as how long the stomachache lasted or how long it takes to get to school)</p> <p>Defines morality based on outside authority and rules</p> <p>Develops a sense of fairness</p> <p>Understands that another person’s perspective may be different than his/her own point of view</p>	<p>Try to create an environment that feels safe and friendly to the child, and position yourself on his/her level during interactions.</p> <p>Convey interest in the child’s (self-centered) world by asking about and listening as s/he talks about personal items (favorite books or shows, games, places to go, etc.).</p> <p>Use a friendly, low-key approach and give concrete explanations for speaking with the child. (“I would like to hear what you did on your visit with your dad yesterday.”)</p>	<p>Don’t confuse seemingly adult conversational ability with adult abstract thinking ability: the 7-year-old child who reports “Mom’s boyfriend dumped her because she was always drunk” may have his facts right, but s/he still needs to be reassured as a child. (In such instances, an adult might wonder, “What’s going on with Mom?” On the other hand, the child’s real concern is “What’s going to happen to me?”)</p>

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<p>Can take some responsibility for household chores</p> <p>Normal nonverbal communication includes wiggling, fidgeting, jiggling one leg, hopping from foot to foot, etc.</p>	<p>Recognizes his/her own emotions but may have difficulty describing them ("I have a stomachache" really means "I am feeling scared.")</p> <p>Is acutely aware of pressure from parents, teachers, and others</p>	<p>Provide reassurance that the child is doing the right thing by talking with you (including securing parental permission and support as appropriate).</p>	

Indicators of possible developmental problems:

Regresses in language skills

Doesn't speak or stops speaking

Begins to stutter

Appears incoherent, illogical, pressured, and/or poorly connected to reality when speaking

Has tantrums and goes to violent extremes