

Realistic Behavioral Expectations

What to Expect from 5- and 6-year old's

Children between the ages of five and six years old are no longer “little kids.” They are in a very important transition in their lives. They have developed skills that make them appear to have things more together, so they are often approached by adults as an “older kid.” However, they still do not have the basic skills necessary to keep up with the older children.

Between the ages of five and six years old, children are very enthusiastic. Their language skills have increased, and they are able to pay attention for longer periods of time. They are developing thinking and reasoning skills and have gotten better at seeing other people's point of view. All of this increases their autonomy and gives them a sense of independence.

And while these new, more mature skills are exciting to see 5- and 6-year old's develop, they often come with a “know it all” kind of attitude. At this age, children begin testing the boundaries of rules set in place due to their increased thinking skills. They also begin talking back because they now have a more expansive vocabulary to express their opinions with. But despite these more developed thinking and language skills, children at this age may still whine or have meltdowns occasionally. Five- and six-year old's also enjoy the spotlight but tend to lack proper sportsmanship. Because of this, they may accuse others of cheating during games or get upset when they don't win.



Five- and six- year old's need adults in their lives that understand this unique transition period. They want guidance and structure and their confidence increases by making mentors proud. However, they tend to act silly when they are nervous or excited and they do not take well to criticism. For these reasons, the best approach is the use of positive reinforcement with them. Praising the good behavior that they exhibit will increase their confidence and, therefore, increase the likelihood of their negative behaviors being more manageable. It is also important for adults to be mindful when voicing expectations so that these children learn that privileges are earned by making appropriate choices.

Understanding the struggles of development that 5- and 6- year old's are faced with is essential for the adults in their lives. Giving them the ability to make choices is vital to continuing the development of their autonomy. However, it is also essential to keep boundaries in check. Remember to not take things personally when a challenge presents itself and you will be able to respond more appropriately with this newfound insight and clarity.

Taken from the Skillz Program