

How Children Perceive Differences at Each Age and Stage

2- to 3-year-olds may:	4-year-olds may:	5-year-olds may:	6- to 7-year-olds may:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* notice and ask about other adults' physical characteristics, although they are still more interested in their own.* notice other children's specific cultural acts. For example: <i>Elena speaks differently from me; Mei eats with chopsticks.</i>* exhibit fears about skin-color differences or the presence of physical disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* show more interest in how they are alike and different from other children; construct theories about what causes physical and cultural differences.* begin to classify people into groups by physical characteristics (same gender, same color).* be confused about the meaning of adult categories for what "goes together." For example, how can a light-skinned child have a dark-skinned parent? Why are children called <i>black</i> when their skin isn't black?* show influence of societal norms in interactions with one another (<i>Only boys can do that</i>).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* show an awareness of additional characteristics, such as different socioeconomic classes and age groups.* demonstrate heightened awareness of themselves and others as members of a family and curiosity about how families of other children and teachers live: <i>How can Sam have two daddies?</i>* continue to construct theories to classify or explain differences among classmates.* continue to absorb and use stereotypes to define others, and to tease or reject other children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* have absorbed much of their family's classification systems for people, but still get confused about why specific people are put into one or another category by adults.* use prevailing biases, based on aspects of identity, against other children.* begin to understand that others also have ethnic identities and lifestyles, as they come to understand their own emerging group identity.

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