

Stages of Adolescent Development	Early Adolescence (Approximately 10-14 years of age)	Middle Adolescence (Approximately 15-16 years of age)	Late Adolescence (Approximately 17-21 years of age)
Identity Development and Movement Toward Independence	Emerging identity shaped by in/external influences; moodiness; improved speech to express oneself; more likely to express feelings by action than by words (may be more true for males); close friendships gain importance; less attention shown to parents, with occasional rudeness; realization parents not perfect; identification of own faults; search for new people to love in addition to parents; tendency to return to childish behavior during times of stress; peer group influence on personal interests and clothing styles.	Self-involvement, alternating between unrealistically high expectations and worries about failure; complaints that parents interfere with independence; extremely concerned with appearance and body; feelings of strangeness about one's self and body; lowered opinion of and withdrawal from parents; effort to make new friends; strong emphasis on the new peer group; periods of sadness as the psychological loss of parents takes place; examination of inner experiences, which may include writing a diary.	Firm identity; ability to delay gratification; ability to think through ideas; ability to express ideas in words; more developed sense of humor; interests and emotions become more stable; ability to make independent decisions; ability to compromise; pride in one's work; self reliance; greater concern for others.
Future Interests and Cognitive Development	Increasing career interests; mostly interested in present and near future; greater ability to work.	Intellectual interests gain importance; some sexual and aggressive energies directed into creative and career interests; anxiety can emerge related to school and academic performance.	More defined work habits; higher level of concern for the future; thoughts about one's role in life.
Ethics and Self-Direction	Rule and limit testing; experimentation with cigarettes, marijuana, and alcohol; capacity for abstract thought.	Development of ideals and selection of role models; more consistent evidence of conscience; greater goal setting capacity; interest in moral reasoning.	Useful insight; focus on personal dignity and self-esteem; ability to set goals and follow through; acceptance of social institutions and cultural traditions; self-regulation of self esteem.
Sexuality	Girls mature faster than boys; shyness, blushing, and modesty; more showing off; greater interest in privacy; experimentation with body (masturbation); worries about being normal.	Concerns about sexual attractiveness; frequently changing relationships; more clearly defined sexual orientation, with internal conflict often experienced by those who are not heterosexual; tenderness and fears shown toward opposite sex; feelings of love and passion.	Concerned with serious relationships; clear sexual identity; capacities for tender and sensual love.
Physical Changes	Gains in height and weight; growth of pubic/ underarm hair; increased perspiration, increased oil production of hair and skin. Girls: breast development and menstruation. Boys: growth of testicles and penis, nocturnal emissions (wet dreams), deepening of voice, facial hair.	Males show continued height and weight gains while female growth slows down (females grow only 1-2 inches after their first menstrual period).	Most young women are fully developed; young men continue to gain height, weight, muscle mass, body hair.



This chart is adapted from the ACT for Youth Center of Excellence publication **Stages of Adolescent Development** by Sedra Spano: <http://www.actforyouth.net/documents/fACT%20Sheet05043.pdf> (PDF: 538K)