

Stages of Adolescent Development	Early Adolescence (approximately 10-14 years of age)	Middle Adolescence (approximately 15-16 years)	Late Adolescence (approximately 17-21 years)
Identity Development and Movement toward Independence	Emerging identity shaped by in/external influences; moodiness; improved speech to express oneself; may be more likely to express feelings by action than by words; 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; 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; concern 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.	Firmer identity; more developed sense of humor; interests and emotions become more stable; taking pride in one's work; self-reliance; greater concern for others increased ability to: delay gratification; think through ideas; express ideas in words; make independent decisions; compromise;.
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; increased 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.
Sexuality	Shyness, blushing, and modesty; more showing off; greater interest in privacy; experimentation with body (masturbation); female-bodied adolescents mature faster than male-bodied; 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; feelings of tenderness, 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; breast development and menstruation; growth of testicles and penis, nocturnal emissions (wet dreams), deepening of voice, facial hair.	Male-bodied adolescents show continued height and weight gains while female-bodied growth slows down (typical growth only 1-2 inches after first menstrual period).	Most female-bodied youth are fully developed; male-bodied youth continue to gain height, weight, muscle mass, body hair.

Learn more on the ACT for Youth website: <https://actforyouth.net/adolescence/>