

Age/Stage	Physical	Cognitive	Social	Implications for Programmers
<p>4-5: Early Years <i>Note: In the very early years (babies, toddlers), recreation is most often provided by parents or caregivers so not described here</i> Ministry of Education (a) (2024).</p>	<p>Run, hop, skip, stand on one leg, jump, dress themselves, follow-the-leader, walk up and down stairs, hold a paintbrush or pencil, can copy basic pictures and shapes. Love to dance and move!</p>	<p>Intense curiosity about the world around them; love to explore. Can speak clearly, use basic grammar conventions, understand stories and make-believe.</p>	<p>Enjoy cooperative play with other children, may have imaginary friends. May or may not be okay with sharing; can become competitive. Attention span about 5-10 minutes.</p>	<p>Provide lots of supervision, lots of variety in the activities offered. Provide balance between high energy and low energy activities. Use simple speech and provide few rules. Balance activities that develop gross and fine motor skills. Get outside (safely) in all weather.</p>
<p>6-9: Middle Childhood Ministry of Education (b) (2024).</p>	<p>Physically energetic and focused on gross motor skills: enjoy climbing, running, hopping, skipping, dancing, running. May tire easily and need frequent breaks.</p>	<p>Find it tough to concentrate on more than one thing at a time; don't use a lot of logic - imaginations and make-believe play are still the thing.</p>	<p>Impulsive, low emotional control. Like playing with other children but can be highly sensitive in conflicts. Can take turns. Some will have a well-developed sense of fairness. Impressions of socially imposed gender-roles are forming.</p>	<p>Continue balancing activities that develop gross and fine motor skills, encourage free and risky play, provide activities for inter-generational play, continue close supervision. Rules (e.g; for games) can be more structured. Encourage and structure time for nature play.</p>
<p>10-12: Older Childhood Aptos et al., (2016)</p>	<p>Physical coordination is improving; can sustain longer periods of physical activity. Understand principles of cause and effect. Ability to acquire skills is high; enjoy experiential (hands-on) learning. Onset of puberty (earlier in girls), bodies are changing</p>	<p>Heightened awareness of self-concept. Increased ability to resolve conflicts, but feelings can run high, and criticism from adults is generally not well-received due to emotional sensitivity. Declared interest in arts, sports and hobbies begins</p>	<p>Socially imposed gender-roles have formed. Children generally do not wish to be embarrassed or singled out by adults; a desire for independence from adults is developing. Social cliques form; some can experience feelings of isolation.</p>	<p>Offer opportunities for pro-social skill development through group activities and outdoor play. Encourage trying new things and risk-taking. Rules can be more complex. Maintain close (but subtle) adult supervision; perceived gender norms may play a role in engagement.</p>
<p>13-15: Adolescence Pálinkás et al., (2022)</p>	<p>Significant physical growth and development; puberty well-established; sex characteristics continue to develop. Height and muscle mass increases. Can be significant physical differences between individuals of the same age.</p>	<p>Energy has evened out; less impulsive, more measured approach to activities. Personal interests begin to deepen. Increased ability to empathize & see others' points of view. Problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills increase.</p>	<p>Feelings of inclusion and belonging play key roles in maintaining a healthy self-image. Increased dependence on friend group for identity and self-esteem. Emotional states and moods often in flux according to hormones.</p>	<p>Where possible, use a participative leadership style to involve participants in decision-making. Get outside. Program unique, exciting, novel activities; structure group activities that focus on teamwork and communication.</p>

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16-20: Late Adolescence Aaron et al., (2022)	Many have reached full adult height. Puberty and sexual maturity still underway. There can still be significant physical differences between individuals of the same age. Physical coordination generally more refined; excellent ability to acquire and refine physical skills. Physical competence increases.	Curiosity about the world expands, personal interests become more refined, deeper development of problem-solving skills and abstract thinking. Many crave adventure and risk; some will be drawn to engage in unhealthy risk-taking.	Social groups and peer relationships remain of great importance; sexual maturity continues; romantic relationships form. Increased need for independence from adults. Experimentation with different friend groups and social circles.	Continued use of a participative leadership style involves participants in decisions. Offer a variety in recreation offerings: special events, sports, outdoor recreation, arts. Provide opportunities for group and team activities that promote belonging, but also time for quiet self-reflection.
21-30: Young Adulthood Calgar et al., (2009)	Fitness and physical abilities peak; participation in team sports often wanes as post-secondary school, travel, career or family obligations get established.	Executive functions (focus, memory, self-regulation, flexible thinking) become refined. Experiences are processed as learning opportunities; intellectual development is high	Often stability-seeking; as self-identity becomes more apparent, older individuals may appear to “settle down”. Multiple social or friend groups from work, school, or community can form.	Provide recreation opportunities that foster social connections and friendships; be aware when planning the timing of programs that some will have work commitments and young families to consider. Provide hobby or interest-specific programming.
31-50: Middle Adulthood Freysinger, (1987).	Often characterized by a general slowing down of physical recreational activity due to family or work obligations. Some individuals may become deliberately more physically active as a way of maintaining good physical health. Time spent on hobbies and specialized recreational interests increases in this stage.	For those who enjoy being challenged intellectually, a desire for learning may emerge, either through workshops, hobbies or further education. Creativity, problem-solving, and understand abstractions are at their peak. For some, this stage triggers an increase in community engagement and a desire to ‘give back’.	Horowitz (2022) calls Middle Adulthood the ‘sandwich years’, as those in this stage are in the middle if caring for both aging parents while still raising children. Many in this age bracket have a strongly developed work or family identity. Work and family-related stress can be significant. Those without children may have a strong social emphasis on a romantic partner or friend group.	Recreation programs geared to mental and emotional wellness are popular with this age group, as are fitness programs designed to help maintain healthy bodyweight. Events like art exhibits, music festivals, trade shows and special interest events (e.g., the Western Fair Wine & Food Show) tend to be popular. Provide opportunities for intergenerational activities, couples-based programs and singles.
51-64: Older Adulthood Sweeney & Zorotovich, (2018).	Changes in physical abilities become evident. Eyesight, muscle strength, flexibility and metabolism tend to diminish and slow, and weight gain is common. For women, menopause and its	Individuals in this age group demonstrate strong cognitive and intellectual skills and abilities. There is an increased awareness of global and social issues as people in this age	Social relationships take on increased significance as people in this age group as they approach retirement age. Family (direct, extended) become	Provide programs for groups and individuals and inter-generational activities. Focus programs on themed special events and hobbies, couples and small friend groups.

	related physical changes occurs. The development of diabetes, heart disease and cancers can affect people frequently at this life stage.	group consider their own mortality. There may be a decline in short-term memory.	increasingly important. Mortality-related midlife crises may arise resulting in stress that can trigger sudden, radical changes in behaviour.	Programs geared to mental and emotional wellness are popular with this age group, as are the addition of more flexible time periods for recreation.
65+: Seniors DeCarlo (1974)	Great variation exists in this age group. Some people exhibit energy and vitality, while others seem diminished and frail. Physical changes in eyesight, hearing, balance, physical strength, ability to sleep and cognitive ability inevitably change, but many seniors remain sharp well into old age. Decrease of bone mass and strength can result in bones fracturing more easily. Loss of balance (and subsequent falls) is also commonly seen in people in this age group.	May see cognitive decline and the impact of memory loss and dementias through diseases like Alzheimer's, although some stay mentally acute through end of life. Some seniors, especially those on multiple medications, can be negatively impacted by the side effects of medications taken to regulate heart irregularities, blood pressure, etc. Many seniors will enjoy storytelling and reminiscing. Depression is quite common among people in this age group.	With the deaths of spouses and friends, the risk of isolation and loneliness is high. Seniors of all ages have a strong need for social activities that foster relationships and keep them connected to others. Hobbies, social activities, inter-generational activities and travel are especially popular with younger seniors. For the elderly (80+) spending time with family and/or receiving social supports is key to maintaining quality of life.	Program for small groups and keep programs short and sweet. Offer a wide variety of program choices that enhance the physical, mental, social intellectual, emotional and spiritual domains. Be prepared to modify activities to accommodate those with mobility issues and those in cognitive decline. Provide programs that support hobbies and enjoyable pastimes. Provide comfortable programming outdoors when possible.

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