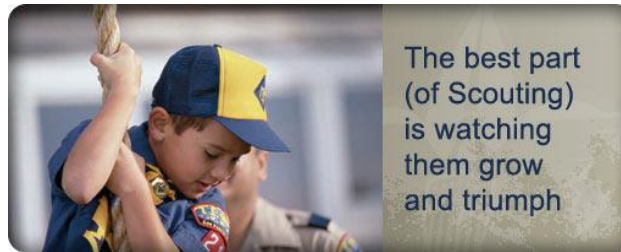


UNDERSTANDING CUB SCOUT-AGE BOYS



Scouting is designed to meet the ever-changing needs of boys and to help them develop character, citizenship, and personal fitness.

To understand where we want them to go, we need to understand where they are. The Cub Scout years are a time of rapid development for young boys, falling between the total dependence of early childhood and the relative independence of early adolescence.

Cub Scout-age boys are becoming more competent, and they need to be able to demonstrate what they can do— whether it's climbing fences, performing stunts on their bikes or skateboards, or taking dares.

Eager to prove themselves to their friends (and themselves), they show off what they can do, sometimes forgetting to plan ahead and forgoing safety.

Cub Scouting activities are designed for boys who are in the normal range of development, but the program is flexible enough to adapt to the needs of boys who are developing faster or slower than their peers or who face physical, mental, or emotional challenges.

Cub Scout leaders who understand and recognize the developmental changes of these years will have a much better Cub Scouting experience. So will the boys.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Although typical behavior patterns exist for any age group, every boy is unique. Racial, ethnic, social, and cultural environments influence development, as does biology. For example, some 10-year-olds are already experiencing the growth spurts associated with puberty, while others still resemble 8-year-olds. It's important not to confuse physical size with psychological maturity. Minds and bodies often develop at different rates.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Boys are full of energy.** They need a way to burn it off, especially if they've been sitting in a classroom for a long time. They can be noisy and boisterous, and they need to romp and play.
- **Boys are steadily growing.** Young boys are often quite thin and lack muscle mass. Second graders are losing baby teeth and tend to have an "all teeth and ears" look. By fifth grade, boys are taller and heavier, have more stamina, and are capable of more sustained effort.
- **Boys are becoming better coordinated.** Boys who are clumsy and accident-prone gradually become more coordinated. By fifth grade, most boys have achieved much better control and increased their mastery of large-muscle activities.
- **Boys are impatient with aspects of personal hygiene.** Tasks like brushing their teeth and combing their hair seem unimportant. Self-care routines can be a source of conflict. Few boys of Cub Scout age appreciate the importance of cleanliness.



MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Boys are concrete thinkers and take things very literally.** Subtleties and humor frequently escape them, and they often interpret “what if” and “maybe” as promises to be kept.
- **Boys are beginning to understand that behavior involves motivation and consequences.** By first and second grade, boys are likely to try to explain away bad outcomes by saying, “I didn’t mean it.”
- **Boys enjoy activities that are distinct from their school-day experiences.** By second grade, most boys have begun to read on their own with varying success and interest. Cub Scouting often stimulates interest in reading and learning because the activities create a desire to know more. Cub Scouting activities don’t have the association with failure that formal schoolwork has for some boys; boys having problems at school might turn out remarkable Cub Scout projects.
- **Boys have different learning styles.** Some boys learn best visually, some learn best by listening, and some learn best through a hands-on approach. Cub Scouting’s emphasis on learning by doing gives these boys a chance to shine.
- **Boys are curious and adventurous.** For Cub Scouts, the world is still new and waiting to be discovered. First- and second-graders are eager to meet life head-on—often with a willingness to take risks that outruns their abilities.
- **Boys can be highly imaginative.** Boys are ready to picture themselves in all kinds of roles and situations. Their ability to pretend lets them explore new ideas and feelings and their relationships with other people. Cub Scouting plays an important role in keeping curiosity alive by letting boys do and learn things that interest them.
- **Boys are collectors.** Cub Scouts seem to accumulate things indiscriminately, and they’re more concerned with quantity than quality. Fifth-graders retain their interest in collecting but often settle down to a more serious focus on one or two kinds of items. They are likely to spend more time counting, sorting, and arranging collections.
- **Boys have short attention spans.** First- and second-graders throw themselves into activities with great enthusiasm but might be ready to move on to something else in a remarkably short time. However, when something really interests them, Cub Scouts can stick with it longer. They also like to return again and again to favorite activities.
- **Boys are still developing a sense of time.** Many first- and second-graders can tell time with a clock, but they might have little sense of what time means. They express interest in planning and particularly like to know what is coming next. By age 10, most boys have improved their time-management skills. They enjoy making rather elaborate plans and can generally get to where they want to be pretty much on schedule.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- **Boys have a strong need for adult/family support.** Although they may be willing to try new things on their own or with peers, boys still need family members and adults they look up to whom they can trust and with whom they can share their experiences. By fifth grade, boys are ready for greater independence and responsibility. They resent being treated like “little kids,” although they still want their parents to be there for them.
- **Boys are learning to interact within groups.** Generally, boys understand the importance of friends, and many appear anxious about whether others approve of them. Still immature, they often view life mainly from their own perspective.
- **Boys are becoming genuinely devoted and committed to their friends.** They usually engage with enthusiasm in group activities. Many youngsters of this age also form spontaneous clubs and other fluid, though often short-lived, peer groups.
- **Boys prefer dynamic group games.** Young Cub Scout–age boys love to succeed, and they have a great desire to win every time. They have difficulty understanding and mastering intricate rules of games and may lay blame on their opponents. Fifth-graders, on the other hand, usually have a sharp sense of rules. They can make a distinction between intentional and accidental rule violation.
- **Boys need acknowledgment for their performance.** Sometimes boys avoid trying innovative endeavors because they are afraid that others might see them perform inadequately. Fifth-graders thrive on praise, too, but they prefer not to be singled out in front of others.



LEARNING VALUES

- **Boys are developing ideas about right and wrong.** By second grade, many boys do what is right because they've progressed in their moral development and learned important values. Others may do what is right primarily to avoid punishment.
- **Boys are beginning to see the value of trying to get along with others.** By age 10, most boys have begun to relate conformity to rules with self-interest. They are interested in the benefits they receive when they follow the rules. This age is also a time of much bargaining. They are beginning to understand that others have rights, too.
- **Boys have a growing appreciation for fairness.** Some psychologists believe that sensitivity to the feelings of others is the beginning of a moral sense. The young Cub Scout takes a fairly rigid stand on issues of fairness.
- **Boys are beginning to see that values are important.** Some boys begin to realize that the ideas expressed in the Cub Scout Promise and the Law of the Pack are values that American society feels are important. Modern American culture requires both boys and girls to be able to experience moral issues in terms of obedience to rules and to explore them within networks of relationships.
- **Boys like being helpful.** Boys are not too young to do things for others.
- **Boys enjoy helping others, especially if they can see that their service actually meets a need.** At the end of a service project, it's important to have time for discussion so that boys can understand their experience, learn from it, and grow.

