

Cubbies Characteristics



Congratulations, Cubbies® leader! You have accepted the challenge of working with one of the most energetic — and most impressionable — age groups in Awana®.

Whether a new worker or a veteran leader, your first moments in a room of wiggly, giggly preschoolers may make you feel like panicking. Their seemingly nonstop movement and noise can be overwhelming, and your confidence may suffer a meltdown. If you are uneasy at the thought of working with these often unpredictable little people, remember — you are not alone. God is with you, and He will strengthen you for the task at hand (Isaiah 41:10). Your job is to be prepared to teach these children with excellence. In order to do so, it is imperative that you first of all become familiar with the capabilities and characteristics of a preschooler.

Your Cubbies club will consist of children ranging in age from 3 to 5 years. You will find a whole spectrum of maturity, temperament and ability. And while at first glance they may seem little more than babes, spend five minutes with a group of them and you will recognize that they are very bright, eager learners. Their personalities and temperaments are blossoming, and each one is becoming the person he or she will be. Their constant observations of the world and people around them greatly influence their learning and development. And the better you understand how your clubbers grow and learn, the greater your influence on them will be.

Luke 2:52 says that Jesus grew ... *in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.* In that pattern, your Cubbies are learning and growing mentally, physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. And while the following characteristics will not fit every child, here are some basic principles to help you better identify the capabilities of the age group.

Mental Characteristics

Be ready to be amazed! These Cubbies will surprise you with how much they are able to comprehend. Preschoolers have a natural, God-given curiosity, and their little minds are always in high gear, constantly processing information from the world around them. They are tactile learners that love to gain knowledge by touching, tasting and smelling. Your Cubbies will learn best when each of their five senses is incorporated in the educational process. As you are teaching, try to avoid simply talking or reading the lesson to them (most preschoolers can only listen to “teacher talk” for about three to five minutes). Mix up your talking with visuals, movement, drama and other activities to keep Cubbies engaged. (The Cubbies teaching plans lessons are written with this in mind.) As you prepare your lessons, remember that Cubbies can:

Follow several commands at one time.

Solve simple problems and puzzles.

Grasp early math skills.

Distinguish letters and numbers.

Complete simple puzzles.

Imitate a leader.

Enjoy imaginary play.

Understand basic concepts of nature (things are born, grow and die).

Gain knowledge from all five senses.

Form very strong opinions of the world around them.

Once you recognize how their little minds best learn, strive to create a safe and fun environment that promotes learning. Preschoolers love structure and familiarity, which is often why they insist on watching their favorite movie or cartoon over and over and OVER. Apply this principle in your classroom by following the same routine each week and repeating key truths often. As you do so, your Cubbies will thrive.

Physical Characteristics

Just as Jesus grew physically from an infant to a man, your Cubbies are gaining strength and mastering new abilities each day. To help you better understand their level of physical abilities, know that by the time most preschoolers enter your classroom they will be able to:

Get dressed with little help.

Skip.

Hop on one foot.

Run with ease.

Walk backwards.

Bounce a ball.

Throw a ball several feet.

Catch a soft ball.

Ride a tricycle.

Move hands and feet in rhythm.

Start cutting and drawing simple shapes and images.

Manipulate small and large objects.



Each week your Cubbies will be eager to show off a new skill with a confident “Look what I can do” smile. Praise each effort and achievement, and always remember that Cubbies need lots of opportunities to move. Look for ways to incorporate physical action into each activity. Mimic the characters in the Bible lesson; add motions to the Bible verse. Stand and sing a favorite Bible song. By incorporating action you will enhance learning and lessen behavioral distractions.

Emotional and Social Characteristics

Preschoolers are highly emotional. They may enter club clinging tightly to a trusted adult, not willing to let go. Then in a few short moments, they may be running and playing around the room, relishing their new level of independence.

Your Cubbies are also highly social. Even the shyest 3-year-old can interact with others, and many preschoolers can carry on fascinating conversations. Their lives have blossomed to include friendships with those around them, but they are just beginning to recognize how their actions and words evoke both positive and negative responses from others. In order to help new Cubbies adjust to the club setting, keep in mind that your Cubbies:

Desire security and continuity.

Thrive in a structured environment.

Trust adults willingly.

Seek to be independent.

Strive for adult approval.

Recognize nonverbal cues.

Develop friendships with peers easily.

Are very self-centered.

Become easily frustrated.

Exhibit fear toward certain objects or situations.

Remember, their little minds are working hard to figure out their place in your classroom. As their teacher, you have a responsibility to provide an environment where they can learn to love others and bloom into the unique individuals God wants them to be. Why not encourage Cubbies to share their supplies during Coming In and Handbook Time or to cheer on their teammates during Play Time? By doing so, you are giving these children a practical opportunity to learn to love one another.



Spiritual Characteristics

One glance at the list of emotional and social characteristics above reveals that the sin nature of preschoolers is often on display! And while these little ones will often test every boundary given to them (ever hear of temper tantrums?), realize that these learners have receptive hearts. Adults often assume that young children cannot grasp doctrine and truths of God's Word. Not so! With the help of each Cubbies lesson (called a Bear Hug) you will take these little minds on a journey to learn these great truths about God over the course of the two-year Cubbies program:

God is the creator.

God is the one true God.

God's Word is truth.

God keeps His promises.

God is mighty.

God is in charge.

God sent the Savior.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Jesus loves all people.

Jesus says to tell the good news (of the gospel) to others.



Your Cubbies are able to understand and respond to the gospel. At the beginning of each Cubbies club year, the gospel is presented in the entrance booklet (Bear Hugs A and B) and the first two lessons (Bear Hugs 1 and 2). The gospel is constantly retold throughout the lessons in each Cubbies year. Your job is to present the material in a simple, age-appropriate manner. As these precious little ones begin to understand and respect who God is, they will recognize their need for a relationship with Him.

As you look back over this list of Cubbies characteristics, hopefully you will see the magnitude of your commitment. Far too often Cubbies leaders have a misguided view of club. They eagerly interact with other leaders, but halfheartedly flip through the lesson material minutes before their Cubbies' arrival. Don't forget this sad truth — Cubbies and other Awana programs may offer the only opportunity for some children to hear the gospel. These students will begin to form their opinions of God and His Word based on what you as a leader teach them.

Overwhelmed? Don't be! God has given you an incredible opportunity, and He will bless your efforts to share His truth with these little ones. As you faithfully commit to excellence in your ministry with Cubbies, you will be able to teach them the gospel of Christ and then train them to serve Him. And that is our ultimate goal.