

# Does Birth Order Really Matter?

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*Being the oldest child, the middle child, or the “baby” may impact our personal development.*

Birth order refers to the chronological positions in the family. Some psychologists have labeled it the “family constellation.” Does your place in your family affect your personality? It is interesting to explore the possibilities.

It is quite easy to want to oversimplify the birth order theory. Many factors influence our personality development. Birth order is just one. Within the birth order positions, there are many exceptions. Variables, including the gender of the children and the years between each birth, can skew the theory. However, there are too many common traits to ignore the possibility that your place in your family has helped to mold your responses to others.

***Here is a brief listing of some common characteristics of each birth order position.***

## The Firstborn

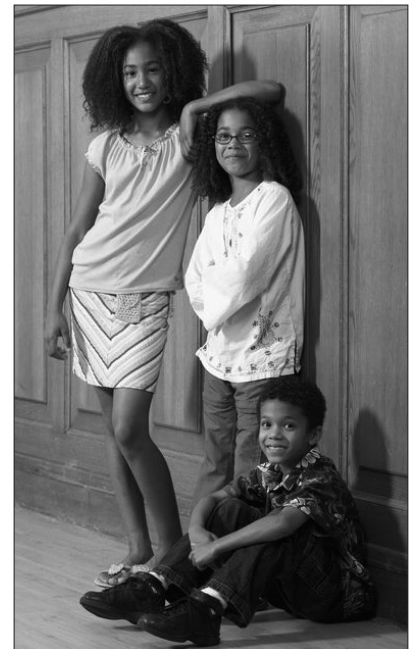
The firstborn receives undivided attention from parents until the next child arrives. He is often described as:

- serious
- a leader
- conscientious
- determined
- goal-oriented
- conservative
- rule-conscious
- organized
- high-achieving
- responsible
- detail-oriented

## The Only Child

The only child is special because, either by choice or circumstance, she is the only chance her parents will have at parenting. She is often described with the same words used for the firstborn with “super” in front. She is portrayed as:

- creative
- having difficulty with peers
- possessing strong language skills
- having trouble sharing
- comfortable with adults
- a perfectionist



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## The Middle Child

The middle child is often “squeezed” between an ambitious older sibling and a precocious younger one. Many times, he looks for acceptance and recognition among peers instead of family. He may experience feelings of neglect from his parents because his siblings’ strong personalities demand attention.

Traits common among middle children are:

- flexible and adaptable
- outgoing
- diplomatic
- social
- peacemaker or mediator
- competitive
- generous
- has strong peer relationships

## The Youngest Child

The youngest child frequently gets the most attention from family members. Often coddled by older siblings, the youngest child is sometimes indecisive and slow to commit. Used to getting her own way, the baby of the family can be demanding and even spoiled. Some other descriptions:

- charming
- attention-loving
- manipulative
- impatient
- affectionate
- uncertain
- persistent

## Birth Order Awareness

How can an awareness of birth order help you?

Avoid trying to reduce the birth order impact to a systematic formula. Instead, examine the common traits of your birth order position or look

for the characteristics in your children, your spouse, or others. Once you understand that birth order influences could be affecting you



and those around you, you can find ways to interact more effectively.

### Notes of Interest about Birth Order:

- A majority of the U.S. presidents were either only sons or firstborns.
- Only four U.S. presidents were the youngest in their family.
- All of the actors who have portrayed James Bond were firstborns.

### Famous Firstborn Children:

Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, Jimmie Carter, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Winston Churchill, Bill Cosby, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Geraldo Rivera, John Wayne

### Famous Only Children:

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Robert DeNiro, Tommy Lee Jones, Robin Williams, Rudy Guiliani, Alan Greenspan, Tiger Woods, Leonardo DaVinci

### Famous Middle Children:

Donald Trump, Susan B. Anthony, Barbara Walters, David Letterman, John F. Kennedy, Bill Gates, Princess Diana

### Famous Youngest Children:

Drew Carey, Jim Carey, Billy Crystal, Eddie Murphy, Rosie O'Donnell, Whoopi Goldberg, Katie Couric, Ross Perot, Edward Kennedy, Harriett Tubman, Clara Barton

2007: 10M

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