

How Young Children Learn Race

The concept of race does not need to be explicitly taught for young children to notice racial differences and develop racial prejudices. Though having conversations about race with young children can seem difficult, these conversations are essential to develop an anti-racist society that empowers young children to celebrate what makes them unique.



Adapted from "[Children Are Not Colorblind: How Young Children Learn Race](#)" by Dr. Erin Winkler

When do children learn race?

- By 6 months children can categorize people based on race
- By 2 years of age children begin to use race to explain the behavior of others
- By 3 to 5 years of age children begin to categorize people by race and express bias based on race



- Children learn and conform to the broader cultural and social norms around them through interactions with a variety of people in their environment
- Children observe patterns in the behaviors of others to construct their own beliefs about race
- Children are taught that race is a social category that is important and use it to categorize people

How can caregivers support children as they learn race?

- Engage in open and honest conversations about race and racism to discourage children from adopting prevalent stereotypes about race
- Provide accurate and age appropriate information about structural racial inequality that exists in society
- Be alert to children's potentially biased language and actions to promote more anti-racist behavior
- Encourage children to think critically about differences between people
- Empower children to push back against racist behaviors



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