

Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet

Family and Consumer Sciences

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Birth Order

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Birth order is one way to gain an understanding of friends, family members and co-workers. Some researchers believe how you are placed in your family can have an influence on personality traits. Other factors must also be considered. These include genetics and the environment in which you were raised.

There are no magical formulas to help us understand our friends and family. However birth order research may offer "clues" about why people tend to be the way they are. Through your position in the family (birth order) you develop your behavior pattern, way of thinking and emotional response. Your birth order helps determine your expectations, your strategies for dealing with people and your weaknesses.

Understanding birth order may give some insight into a better understanding of yourself and others. Birth order

Only-children are considered as a specialized type of first-borns. They are generally characterized much the same as firstborns who have siblings.

A good description of middle children is balanced. Middle children are good mediators and have superior cooperation skills. They don't have their parents all to themselves or get their own way. Therefore, they learn to negotiate and compromise. Middle children often make excellent managers and leaders because of these skills.

Characteristics of the Middle Child:

- Flexible
- Diplomatic
- Peacemaker
- Generous
- Social
- Competitive

Youngest children in the family are typically outgoing and great at motivating other people. They are also affectionate, uncomplicated and sometimes a little absent minded.

Studies show that babies of the family gravitate toward vocations that are people oriented. Good sales people are often last borns.

Characteristics of the last born child:

- Risk takers
- Outgoing
- Idea people
- Creative
- Humor
- Question authority

Birth order isn't a simplistic 1-2-3 system that says all first-borns are equally one way, all second children are another and last-born kids are always just like this or that. These are tendencies and general characteristics that often apply. There are dynamics within families that can change relationships.

Variables can affect each family situation. These variables include spacing (the number of years between children), the sex of the child, physical differences, disabilities, the birth order position of parents, any blending of two or more families due to death or divorce and the relationship between parents.

Whether raising your children or working with adults the key is to remember everyone is an individual. Birth order is another attempt to gain insight into the complex behavior of human beings.

Sources: *The Birth Order Challenge*, by Clifford Isaacson;
The Birth Order Book by Kevin Lehman