

# What Does Your Birth Order Say About You: Oldest

Ever wonder why siblings raised under the same roof can often be so different? Many psychologists like believe the secret to sibling personality differences lies in birth order -- whether you're a first-, middle-, last-born, or only child -- and how parents treat their child because of it.

Meri Wallace, a child and family therapist for over 20 years and author of *Birth Order Blues* says in her book "Some of it has to do with the way the parent relates to the child in his/her spot, and some of it actually happens because of the spot itself. Each spot has it's own set of unique challenges that shape the individual."

To be clear, it's not necessarily the fact that a child came out of his mother's womb first that they grew up to be a cautious leader who thrives on being seen as reliable. Rather, it's the fact that his/her parents treated them as their firstborn child that shaped their attitude and behavior.

Below is some information about your birth order and what it may say about you

## Firstborn/Oldest

As the leader of the pack, firstborns often tend to be: dependable, organized, cautious, controlling and achievers. Firstborns bask in their parents' presence, which may explain why they sometimes act like mini-adults. Firstborns are diligent and want to be the best at everything they do. They excel at winning the hearts of their elders.

Did you know over half of U.S presidents were firstborns. Clearly, firstborns are natural leaders. They also tend to be reliable, conscientious (thoughtful) and perfectionists who don't like surprises. Although, firstborns are typically aggressive, many are also compliant people pleasers. They are model children who have a strong need for approval from anyone in charge.

As one parent, Lori Kiel McGowan, a public health consultant in Cambridge, Massachusetts, described her firstborn son Kiel during a birthday party she threw for him, "For his sixth birthday, we invited some friends of his choosing," McGowan recalls. "For maybe the first half hour to 45 minutes, he crawled into a corner behind a booth and played by himself. These were close friends from school and after-school and the neighborhood. But after [his cautiousness waned], he came out and had a great time." When presented with a new situation, Kiel's cautious nature manifested itself in temporary introversion. However, once he became acclimated to his new environment, his caution subsided.

## The Grown-Up Firstborn

As firstborns grow older, their traits are not necessarily lost. Firstborn child Tracy Ragust, a 35-year-old from Denver, fully identifies herself as an achiever. "I want to be the best dressed, in a quirky-fashionable way; I want to have the best fantasy football team; I want to be the best editor; I want to be the most insightful and understanding partner; I want to be the sexiest and the smartest and the most interesting," Ragust says. "And it's not because I'm really competitive or want to be better than anybody else, but just because I want to be the best." Her ambition carried over to her studies in law school, where she studied all the time and prepared for exams by making her own outlines according to her specific organization system. Perhaps in part due to her diligence, Rackauskas graduated summa cum laude and now works as a legal editor, making sure everything that passes through her hands meets her standards.

*Answer the following questions in complete sentences in your "Activities & Homework" section.*

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- 2) Pick a additional column on the board and explain what traits (pick 2) in that column you have seen in a sibling or in a friend.*
- 3) Hypothesize two factors you think might influence why somebody in a a particular birth order may not exhibit certain qualities normally associated with their birth order.*

# What Does Your Birth Order Say About You: Middle

Ever wonder why siblings raised under the same roof can often be so different? Many psychologists like believe the secret to sibling personality differences lies in birth order -- whether you're a first-, middle-, last-born, or only child -- and how parents treat their child because of it.

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## The Middle Child

The middle child often feels left out and a sense of, "Well, I'm not the oldest. I'm not the youngest. Who am I?" This sort of hierarchical floundering leads middle children to make their mark among their peers, since parental attention is usually devoted to the beloved firstborn or baby of the family.

In general, middle children tend to be: people-pleasers, somewhat rebellious ones who thrives on friendships, a part of large social circles and peacemakers. In general they are the most difficult to pin down. One thing is for sure they are guaranteed to be opposite of their older sibling, but that difference can manifest in a variety of ways. Middle children often feel like their older brother gets all the glory while their younger sister escapes all discipline. Because the middle child feels that the world pays him less attention, he tends to be secretive; he/she does not openly share their thoughts or feelings.

Middle children may not feel they have a special place in the family so friends and peer groups become much more important. They can usually read people well, they are peacemakers who see all sides of a situation, they are independent and inventive. If a firstborn is a company's CEO, the middle child is the entrepreneur.

## The Grown-Up Middle Child

Holly Schrock, a 31-year-old at-home mother, is a middle child. Sandwiched between an older and younger sister, Schrock exhibited the same rebellious streak that her middle daughter Maggie does now. "I wasn't a bad kid, but I was definitely pushing the envelope a little," Schrock says. In fact, at one point during her teen years, Schrock became embroiled in an argument with her parents that resulted in her running away for three days. Though Schrock admits she has since calmed down a bit, she still won't take anyone's guff. "I don't like being told what to do, period." As an adult Schrock is very good at blending into a crowd but very capable of getting attention when needed. "Still to this day I like being in large groups, even though I may not say much but trust me when I want to say something I am very good at being heard."

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# What Does Your Birth Order Say About You: Youngest

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## The Youngest/Last Born Child

Youngest children tend to be the most free-spirited due to their parents' increasingly laissez-faire attitude towards parenting the second (or third, or fourth, or fifth...) time around. The baby of the family tends to be: fun-loving, uncomplicated, manipulative, outgoing, attention-seekers and potentially self-centered.

Megan, an at-home mom in San Diego, says her 7-year-old daughter Kacey loves the spotlight and will wrestle it away from others, if need be. "Kacey loves to go out into our backyard and put on shows," Megan says. "One time she was out there roller skating with her older sister, Jessica, but when Jessica started skating in these pirouettes that Kacey couldn't do, Kacey deliberately fell down to get our attention."

Babies of the family are social and outgoing, they are the most financially irresponsible of all birth orders. They just want to have a good time. Knowing that these kids love the limelight, it's no surprise to discover that Billy Crystal, Cameron Diaz, Drew Carey, Jim Carey and Steve Martin are all lastborns

## The Youngest as a Grown-Up

Lastborn child Janice Lee, now 25 years old and working as an architect in New York City, definitely identifies with the simplistic, uncomplicated nature of a last-born child. "Most girls would die if their boyfriends didn't get them something for their birthday," she says. "But my boyfriend and I don't exchange gifts on our birthdays or anniversaries. We're very low-key. We'll go out to dinner, but nothing extravagant." Lee also has a pie-in-the-sky, "everything will work out" worldview: "I don't need to have that much security in my life. I like being spontaneous. I moved to Germany from Toronto for a job last year, and I didn't even speak the language," she says.

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# What Does Your Birth Order Say About You: Only Children

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## The Only Child

Being the only child is a unique position in a family. Without any siblings to compete with, the only child monopolizes his parents' attention and resources, not just for a short period of time like a firstborn, but forever. In effect, this makes an only child something like a "super-firstborn": only children have the privilege (and the burden) of having all their parents' support and expectations on their shoulders. Thus, only children tend to be: mature for their age, perfectionists, conscientious, diligent, and leaders

They are even more responsible and even bigger perfectionists than their first born counterparts. They usually get along better with people older than themselves.

Just one meeting with 5-year-old Lilia, and you'll see. "She has a sophisticated sense of humor and is often one of the few girls her age to get a sarcastic remark or double-meaning," says Lilia's mother Razan Brooker, a software business owner in Boston. "Her teachers are very surprised at her level of understanding of adult humor." Even as a younger child, Lilia exhibited noticeable maturity and diligence. Like most children, Lilia sucked her thumb. But rather than throwing a temper tantrum when asked to break the habit, "she agreed to it and threw away her 'blankie,' claiming that is what makes her want to suck her thumb," Brooker says. "She then proceeded to make a chart for herself consisting of 30 squares for the number of days she was told it will take her to break the habit." A month later, Lilia was sleeping with her hands by her side.

## The Only Child as a Grown Up

Even when only children reach adulthood, they may not necessarily shed their need to be model human beings, able to run a five-minute mile and cook a seven-course meal without consulting a cookbook. "I hosted a Christmas party at my apartment and had to make sure the champagne was chilled, the music was on, the cats were locked in the kitchen," says Margaret Lloyd, a 27-year-old New York advertising associate. "Even after guests arrived, I kept fussing with things, even though it probably took away from some of my enjoyment that evening."

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