

## 6 Birth order

1 a Are you: a first-born child, a middle child, a last-born child, an only child? Do you think this affects your personality? If so, how?

b Try to match descriptions 1–4 with the types of children in 1a. Check new words in a dictionary or with your teacher.

- 1 This child is serious and responsible, and often teaches his/her brothers and sisters.
- 2 This child is rebellious and creative, and isn't interested in his/her parents' opinions.
- 3 This child is confident and hard-working, but isn't as bossy as a first-born child.
- 4 This child is often anxious and moody, and often has more problems as an adult.

2 Read the article. Check your answers to 1b.

### Does birth order affect our personalities?

Are you an only child? Do you have younger brothers and sisters, or are you the youngest in your family? Does birth order have any influence on the type of people we are?

For many years, psychologists have noticed that first-born children and only children are often quite serious and ambitious, not only when they are children, but also as adults. They work harder and worry more about what their parents think.

First-born children often feel more important than their younger brothers and sisters and can be quite bossy. They often behave like a third parent and tell their brothers and sisters what to do. They sometimes grow up to be soldiers, business leaders and politicians. Only children are also confident and hard-working, but perhaps not as bossy as first-borns.

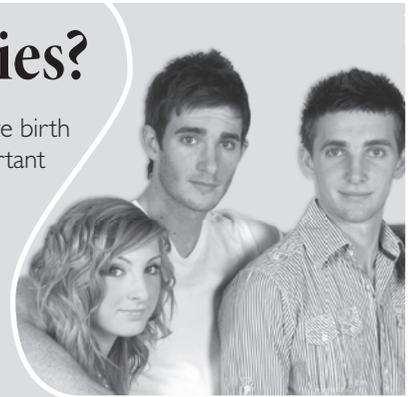
Last-born children, in contrast, aren't as interested in their parents' opinions (or those of their older brothers and sisters), but they are also friendlier and more open. And because they are often more rebellious, they can be very creative. They often grow up to be artists, inventors and musicians.

Middle children are often ... well, in the middle: they want to be serious and responsible, but they also want to be different to their older brother or sister. This means that they are often anxious and moody, and perhaps this is also why middle children have more problems as adults.

Many researchers believe birth order is actually less important than we think. Certainly children (including grown-up children) behave differently when they're in the same room as their parents or their brothers and sisters, but what happens when they're with other people? In one major study, researchers analysed the personalities of 9,664 people and found no important link with their birth order.

One area where birth order seems to make a difference is intelligence. First-borns regularly get better marks in IQ tests than others because their parents usually have more time to spend with their child when they only have one. First-borns also often act as teachers for their younger brothers and sisters, helping them with their homework and teaching them about the world.

So is birth order important? Whatever the truth, we shouldn't allow our birth order to change the way we see ourselves. A first-born can be an inventor and a rebel, just as a last-born can be a leader and an intellectual. We just need to believe in ourselves.



3 Read the article again. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Only children are often quite ambitious.
- 2 Last-born children behave like a third parent.
- 3 First-born children often become artists or musicians.
- 4 Researchers all agree that birth order makes a big difference to our personalities.
- 5 First-borns are often the most intelligent children.
- 6 The writer believes that we shouldn't worry too much about birth order.

4 Do you agree with the description in the article of you, and other people in your family? Why?/Why not?

2 1 a first-born child 2 a last-born child 3 an only child 4 a middle child 5 T 6 F