



BIRTH ORDER CHARACTERISTICS

(This table is a broad simplification of Adler's theory.)

POSITION	FAMILY SITUATION	CHILD'S CHARACTERISTICS			
ONLY	Birth is a miracle. Parents have no previous experience. Retains 200% attention from both parents. May become rival of one parent. Can be over-protected and spoiled. Dethroned by next child. Has to learn to share. Parent expectations are usually very high. Often given responsibility and expected to set an example.	Likes being the center of adult attention. Often has difficulty sharing with siblings and peers. Prefers adult company and uses adult language.	"GHOST CHILD"	stronger or more active. Parents may see one as the older. Child born after the death of the first child may have a "ghost" in front of him. Mother may become over-protective. Parents may be so thankful to have a child that they spoil him. They may try to compensate for the loss of his biological parents.	problems. Stronger one may become the leader. Child may exploit mother's over-concern for his well-being, or he may rebel, and protest the feeling of being compared to an idealized memory. Child may become very spoiled and demanding. Eventually, he may resent or idealize the biological parents.
OLDEST		May become authoritarian or strict. Feels power is his right. Can become helpful if encouraged. May turn to father after birth of next child.	ADOPTED CHILD		
		Is more competitive, wants to overtake older child. May become a rebel or try to outdo everyone. Competition can deteriorate into rivalry.	ONLY BOY AMONG GIRLS	Usually with women all the time, if father is away.	May try to prove he is the man in the family, or become effeminate. Can become very feminine, or a tomboy and outdo the brothers. May try to please the father.
SECOND	He has a pacemaker. There is always someone ahead.	May be even-tempered, "take it or leave it" attitude. May have trouble finding a place or become a fighter of injustice.	ONLY GIRL AMONG BOYS	Older brothers may act as her protectors.	
		Wants to be bigger than the others. May have huge plans that never work out. Can stay the "baby." Frequently spoiled.	ALL BOYS	If mother wanted a girl, can be dressed as a girl.	Child may capitalize on assigned role or protest it vigorously.
MIDDLE	Is "sandwiched" in. May feel squeezed out of a position of privilege and significance.		ALL GIRLS	May be dressed as a boy.	Child may capitalize on assigned role or protest it vigorously.
YOUNGEST	Has many mothers and fathers. Older children try to educate him. Never dethroned.				
TWIN	One is usually	Can have identity			

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