A child (pl. children) is a human being between the stages of birth and puberty, or between the developmental period of infancy and puberty. The term may also refer to an unborn human being. In English-speaking countries, the legal definition of child generally refers to a minor, in this case as a person younger than the local age of majority (there are exceptions like, for example, the consume and purchase of alcoholic beverage even after said age of majority), regardless of their physical, mental and sexual development as biological adults. Children generally have fewer rights and responsibilities than adults. They are generally classed as unable to make serious decisions.   
Child may also describe a relationship with a parent (such as sons and daughters of any age) or, metaphorically, an authority figure, or signify group membership in a clan, tribe, or religion; it can also signify being strongly affected by a specific time, place, or circumstance, as in "a child of nature" or "a child of the Sixties."  
Biological, legal and social definitions  
In the biological sciences, a child is usually defined as a person between birth and puberty, or between the developmental period of infancy and puberty. Legally, the term child may refer to anyone below the age of majority or some other age limit.  
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines child as, "A human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." This is ratified by 192 of 194 member countries. The term child may also refer to someone below another legally defined age limit unconnected to the age of majority. In Singapore, for example, a child is legally defined as someone under the age of 14 under the "Children and Young Persons Act" whereas the age of majority is 21. In U.S. Immigration Law, a child refers to anyone who is under the age of 21.  
Some English definitions of the word child include the fetus (sometimes termed the unborn). In many cultures, a child is considered an adult after undergoing a rite of passage, which may or may not correspond to the time of puberty.  
Children generally have fewer rights than adults and are classed as unable to make serious decisions, and legally must always be under the care of a responsible adult or child custody, whether their parents divorce or not.  
Developmental stages of childhood  
Early childhood  
Early childhood follows the infancy stage and begins with toddlerhood when the child begins speaking or taking steps independently. While toddlerhood ends around age 3 when the child becomes less dependent on parental assistance for basic needs, early childhood continues approximately until the age of 5 or 6. However, according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, early childhood also includes infancy. At this stage children are learning through observing, experimenting and communicating with others. Adults supervise and support the development process of the child, which then will lead to the child's autonomy. Also during this stage, a strong emotional bond is created between the child and the care providers. The children also start preschool and kindergarten at this age: and hence their social lives.  
Middle childhood  
Middle childhood begins at around age 7, and ends at around age 9 or 10. Together, early and middle childhood are called formative years. In this middle period, children develop socially and mentally. They are at a stage where they make new friends and gain new skills, which will enable them to become more independent and enhance their individuality.  
During middle childhood, children enter the school years, where they are presented with a different setting than they are used to. This new setting creates new challenges and faces for children. Upon the entrance of school, mental disorders that would normally not be noticed come to light. Many of these disorders include: autism, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and ADHD.: 303–309  Special education, least restrictive environment, response to intervention and individualized education plans are all specialized plans to help children with disabilities.: 310–311   
Middle childhood is the time when children begin to understand responsibility and are beginning to be shaped by their peers and parents. Chores and more responsible decisions come at this time, as do social comparison and social play.: 338  During social play, children learn from and teach each other, often through observation.  
Late childhood  
Preadolescence is a stage of human development following early childhood and preceding adolescence. Preadolescence is commonly defined as ages 9–12, ending with the major onset of puberty, with markers such as menarche, spermarche, and the peak of height velocity occurring. These changes usually occur between ages 11 and 14. It may also be defined as the 2-year period before the major onset of puberty. Preadolescence can bring its own challenges and anxieties. Preadolescent children have a different view of the world from younger children in many significant ways. Typically, theirs is a more realistic view of life than the intense, fantasy-oriented world of earliest childhood. Preadolescents have more mature, sensible, realistic thoughts and actions: 'the most "sensible" stage of development...the child is a much less emotional being now.' Preadolescents may well view human relationships differently (e.g. they may notice the flawed, human side of authority figures). Alongside that, they may begin to develop a sense of self-identity, and to have increased feelings of independence: 'may feel an individual, no longer "just one of the family."'  
Developmental stages post-childhood  
Adolescence  
Adolescence is usually determined to be between the onset of puberty and legal adulthood: mostly corresponding to the teenage years (13–19). However, puberty usually begins before the teenage years (10—11 for girls and 11—12 for boys). Although biologically a child is a human being between the stages of birth and puberty, adolescents are legally considered children, as they tend to lack adult rights and are still required to attend compulsory schooling in many cultures, though this varies. The onset of adolescence brings about various physical, psychological and behavioral changes. The end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood varies by country and by function, and even within a single nation-state or culture there may be different ages at which an individual is considered to be mature enough to be entrusted by society with certain tasks.