

First-born, middle or last-born?

¹ “Where do you come in your family?” According to Frank Sulloway, a US sociologist, the order in which we came into this world -first-born, middle or last-born- can not only help shape our personality, it could affect the success of our relationships, too. Sulloway has interviewed more than 6000 people over the past 26 years in an attempt to prove this theory: ⁵“Children compete for a place in the family”, he says, “and if one role has already been taken, later-born children have to choose from what's left”. Because firstborns begin life with exclusive parental attention, they are often more open to accepting their parents' values, while later-born children, forced to compete for a place in the family, may grow into rebellious adults.

¹⁰ So if birth order has such a significant impact on our behavior, does it affect our interactions with other people? Can we, for example, judge the suitability of our partners by their birth order? Absolutely, says Sulloway, “Birth order is an excellent way of telling whether a relationship will survive. For example, a marriage between a typical first-born husband who's dominating and assertive, and a later-born wife who likes being looked after, is ¹⁵ very likely to work out”.

According to Kevin Leman, A psychologist, parents often try very hard to make sure that everything is perfect for their first born son or daughter, which leads first born children to be perfectionist. He also claims that the middle child will often excel at i.e. be good at something that the first born child is not as good at. For example, a first born may be very good in ²⁰ school, while the second child is gifted in athletics. Middle children often play the role of peacekeeper in the family, mediating between the older and younger siblings. Unlike first and middle born children, last born children, who are very social and outgoing, take fewer responsibilities and have more freedom, which makes them free-spirited and creative.





COMPREHENSION

1. Find a word or expression in the text which, in context, is similar in meaning to:

- a. be good at (par. 3):
- b. talented (par. 3):
- c. appropriateness (par. 2):
- d. privileged (par. 1) :

2. Answer the following questions using your own words.

- a. What do children have to do when a place in the family has been taken?

- b. Why does Sulloway believe that a marriage between a typical first-born husband and a later-born wife will probably be successful?

- c. Why do first born children become perfectionist?

3. Are the following statements true or false?

- a. Later-born children usually agree with their family values. (T) (F)
- b. Birth order is a good way of knowing whether a relationship will be successful. (T) (F)
- c. A last-born child tends to be more creative as s/he has more freedom. (T) (F)

4. Choose a, b, or c, in each question below. Only one choice is correct.

1. The order in which we are born affects

- a. both our personality and our relationships.
- b. only our personality.
- c. neither our personality nor our relationships.

2. The writer's purpose is to

- a. persuade people that birth order is important just for our personality.
- b. give information about how birth order affects our personality and relationships.
- c. criticize people who don't believe that birth order has an effect in our lives.

Mehmet DURMAZ

Middle East Technical University Northern Cyprus Campus

Task: Put a tick (✓) if you think that the word might be in the text, or a cross (X) if you think that is not in the text.

Rebellious		Husband	
Teenager		Determine	
Mediate		Independent	
Relationship		Survive	
Careful		Compete	
Parental		Theory	

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