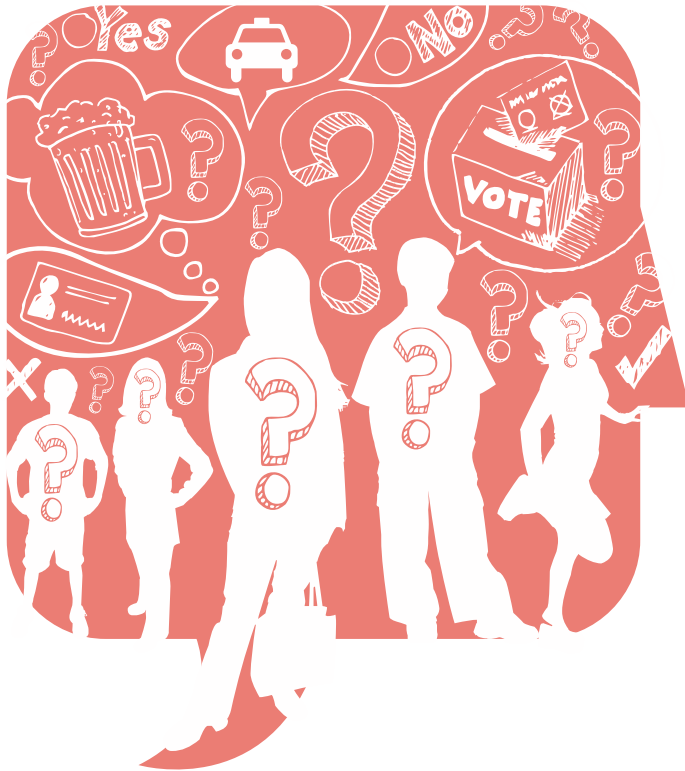


This week's issue:

WHEN SHOULD SOMEONE BE CONSIDERED AN ADULT?



Leboo is an adolescent member of the Maasai people in Kenya. He is preparing to hunt a lion with only a spear and shield. After the lion hunt, Leboo will be considered an adult in his Maasai community. In years past, and even now in certain places, young people were considered adults as soon as they completed a rite of passage, a special ceremony to mark a change of **status**. In the United States today, though, it is difficult to know when adulthood begins and childhood ends. The word “adult” is quite **ambiguous**, because the assignment of adult status varies across domains.

Most states have laws allowing marriage at the age of 18. But in some states, if a parent gives permission, girls can get married as young as 14.

The legal age for voting or joining the military is 18, but those under the age of 21 are not considered **mature** enough to buy alcohol or, in most states, to rent a car. And clients aged 21-25 are charged a large extra daily insurance fee by most car rental companies.

The Affordable Care Act allows parents to keep their children on their health insurance plans until they turn 26. This acknowledges that people under the age of 26 are less likely to have a stable job and lifestyle, typical markers of adulthood.

Due to their age, workers under 20 years old do not have to be paid the minimum wage during their first 90 days of work. This legal **guideline** is called the “youth minimum wage.” Therefore, you are not an adult until age 20 according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

In at least 22 states, if you commit a crime at the age of 8, you can be charged as an adult. In fact, almost 3,000 people under the age of 18, some as young as 13, have been sentenced to life in prison without parole. This means that children can be sentenced to spend the rest of their lives in jail because of something they did in middle school. In fact, on any given day 10,000 people under age 18 are in the same prison system as adults.

Look at the student next to you. Do you consider this person an adult?



WHEN SHOULD SOMEONE BE CONSIDERED AN ADULT?

guideline | mature | ambiguous | due | status

USE THE FOCUS WORDS

guideline (*noun*) a rule

➞ **Sample Sentence:** New school lunch **guidelines** include more fruits and vegetables.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** What are some important **guidelines** for behavior at school?

mature (*adjective*) showing adult qualities

➞ **Sample Sentence:** Those under the age of 21 are not considered **mature** enough to buy alcohol or rent a car.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** How can middle school students show that they are **mature**?

ambiguous (*adjective*) having more than one meaning or interpretation

➞ **Sample Sentence:** The word “adult” is **ambiguous** because the assignment of adult status changes according to the situation.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Why is it **ambiguous** to tell someone to come over “around dinner time”?

due (to) (*preposition*) because of; caused by

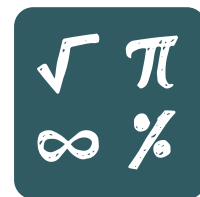
➞ **Sample Sentence:** **Due** to their immaturity, twelve-year-olds are not allowed to drive.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Should students be barred from participating in sports **due** to low grades?

status (*noun*) rank, position, or standing

➞ **Sample Sentence:** In certain places, young people are considered adults only after completing a rite of passage to mark their change of **status**.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Would having a female president improve the **status** of women in the United States?



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DO THE MATH

More people die each year **due** to the harmful effects of cigarettes than from HIV, illegal drug use, alcohol, car accidents, and gun-related incidents combined. Cigarettes are especially addictive to the adolescent brain that is not yet **mature**. People who start smoking in childhood often become lifelong smokers and have a difficult time quitting later on. For this reason, strict **guidelines** limit tobacco advertising to children and it is illegal to sell tobacco products to people under the age of 18 in all U.S. states. Still, each day 3,900 children under 18 years of age will smoke their first cigarette, and 950 of them will become regular smokers.


Not only do many people start smoking as children, but thousands of children work picking tobacco, the plant that is used to make cigarettes! In the U.S., children as young as 12 can work on farms. Children who pick tobacco often report headaches, nausea, and dizziness. These are unambiguous signs of nicotine poisoning **due** to high levels of nicotine, the highly addictive chemical in cigarettes, absorbed through the skin. Toxic pesticides and heavy machinery present additional dangers to those picking tobacco.

Option 1: Which expression could be used to calculate the number of children who become regular smokers each year?

- A. $950 + 365$
- B. $3,900 \div 950$
- C. $365 \times 3,900$
- D. 365×950

Option 2: A group of children working on the Golden Dew Tobacco Farm was interviewed about how old they had been when they started picking tobacco. Their answers are below. Find the mean, median, and mode for this data set.

{12, 15, 13, 12, 14, 13, 13, 12, 14, 13}

 **Discussion Question: Guidelines** that restrict tobacco marketing are meant to protect young people from the harmful effects of smoking. At the age of 18, teenagers achieve a new **status** at which they are considered **mature** enough to assume the risks of tobacco use. But children as young as 12 can work in tobacco fields to earn money, often under dangerous conditions. Why are the same children who work in tobacco fields considered too young to buy tobacco in a store? Should there be one age at which children can buy tobacco and work in tobacco fields? Or should things stay the way they are?



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THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

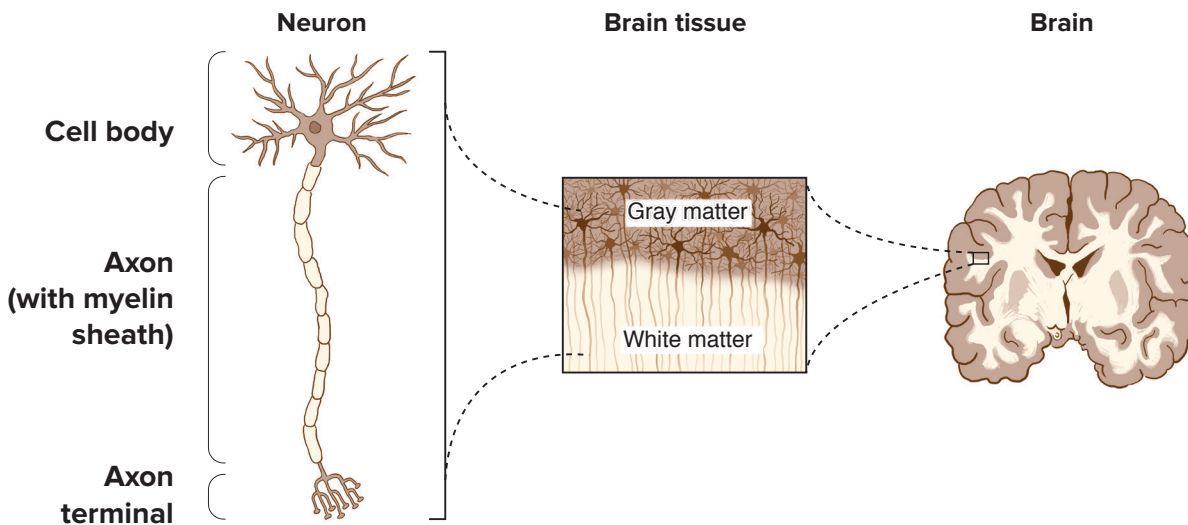
The students in Mr. Seemy’s class were arguing about how **ambiguous** the **status** of adulthood is, and how varied the **guidelines** are for determining when someone is **mature**. They wondered whether there was any biological basis for defining adulthood. Raul, Lisa, and Aliyah found some articles about scientific research on brain development, and shared their findings with the class.

“The brain changes a lot as a person grows from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood,” said Raul. “One important change is in the amount of gray matter and white matter in the brain.”

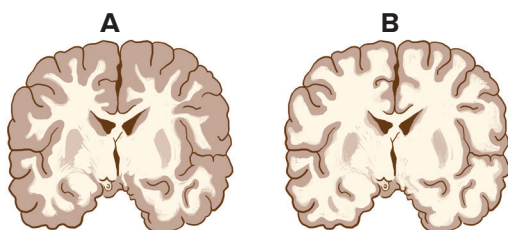
Aliyah added, “The amount of gray matter peaks in the early teenage years, and then decreases as a person grows older. The amount of white matter increases. Gray matter in the brain is associated with learning.”

“So what causes the different appearance of gray matter and white matter?” Mr. Seemy asked. “How do they work differently?”

“Well, the brain is made of billions of nerve cells called neurons,” Lisa responded. “Gray matter is made up mainly of the cell bodies of neurons. White matter is made up mainly of the long tails of the neurons (called axons). These tails are coated with a fatty substance called myelin, which give them a white appearance.”



The illustration below shows the inside of two brains, labeled A and B. Based on the information above, which brain is the adolescent brain, and which is the adult brain? How do you know?



If the ratio of white to gray matter is a measure of how far one has gotten into adulthood, should we be using brain scans instead of chronological age to decide when people are allowed to drink alcohol, drive, and vote?



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TAKE A STAND



Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

guideline | mature | ambiguous | due | status

Lined writing area for student response.