

## The Age of Adulthood

In the United States, 16, 18, and 21 are significant ages in a person's life. A person can do new things at each age to show that he or she is no longer a child. These are all part of the transition to adulthood.

After turning 16 in the United States, a person can be employed, get a driver's license, and leave home. Many high school students learn to drive and get part-time jobs soon after celebrating their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. At 18, people in the United States can vote in government elections and join the military, but they are prohibited from going into nightclubs, buying alcohol like beer or wine, or gambling until they are 21.

In many Latin American countries, a young woman's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday is important. At this age, she is no longer considered to be a girl, but a woman. To mark this special day, families with 15-year-old daughters have a celebration called a quinceañera. The day begins with the young woman and her family going to church. Later, there is a party to which many guests are invited.

In Japan, boys and girls are considered to be adults at the age of 20. At this age, they are allowed to vote and drink alcohol. The second Monday in January is a national holiday called Coming-of-Age Day. On this day, 20-year-olds celebrate by first going to a shrine with their families. Later, they listen to speeches given by city and school leaders. After that, many

celebrate with family and friends late into the night.

In many countries, celebrations do not stop at adulthood. People like to celebrate what they consider to be important ages such as their 50<sup>th</sup> or 60<sup>th</sup> birthdays, or significant events such as the birth of their first child, or their retirement.