

Juveniles know right from wrong

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



This completely confuses me. Pro writes, and I quote, " Youth who are subjected to the more punitive adult court system showed higher rates of recidivism and reoffended more quickly than those youth components that have gone through rehabilitative centers within the criminal justice system." It seems that here my opponent has just offered a statistic in my favor. If I am reading this correctly, it proves that minors going through the rehabilitative centers within the juvenile system has had a more positive effect than subjecting minors to the criminal justice system.

2. Re: Juveniles know right from wrong. Pro's second contention posits that juveniles fully understand what they are doing; therefore, should be punished accordingly. However my opponent admits that science proves there are distinct differences between a juvenile and adult brain. A study done by the National Institute of Health found that the region of the brain that inhibits risky behavior does not fully form until age 25. This is the final stage of brain development [1]. While that is not to say people cannot be held accountable for their actions until that age, it logically follows that people at different ages have a different capacity to understand different things. A three year old does not understand murder the way a thirteen year old does for example, and still a twenty three year old understands murder at an even more complex level. One's capacity to understand their actions absolutely plays a role in the criminal justice system. Visiting a previous example, if a mentally handicapped person walked out of a store holding a piece of store property, people aren't going to assume it was intentional theft and thus may not seek to punish him the way they would an intentional offender. Similarly, people who commit crimes accidentally are not held to the same

standard as those who intentionally inflicted harm. Likewise, children who do not or can not grapple with the severity of their crime should not be held to the same standard as a competent, more developed adult. That is not to say the child should not be punished at all; they should simply be given a fair assessment by acknowledging their inferior reasoning abilities.