

## How Much Older?

My sister Astrid was 3 years old when I was born. One might think that this means she is 3 years older than I am. Not so easy.

My birthday is on February 7. This is great because Charles Dickens also had a birthday on February 7, and he wrote "Christmas Carol." But it was long ago.

Astrid's birthday is on January 1. She says this is the most important day in a year because this is when the year begins, and being born on such a day means that she is very special. I think that by being born on January first she is missing out. I get presents for New Year and for my birthday. Get it?

Anyway, I turned 8 on February 7. She is 11. It looks like she is 3 years older. The numbers will stay this way until the end of December, but then on January 1 she turns 12. During the whole month of January and one week of February it will look like she is 4 years older. Of course, on February 7<sup>th</sup> I will turn 9 and the numbers will be right again. When someone asks Astrid how much older she is than her brother (me!), she often answers: "more than three years older." Then I have to clarify "less than 4 years older." I think sometimes, just for variety, she could say "more than two years older". This would be true, but she never says it. If you would like to be really precise, you might say that Astrid is three years, one month, and one week older than I am or that I am three years, one month, and one week younger than my sister Astrid. It will stay like this forever...

I have not told you yet, but I also have a cousin David. He will be two years old on August 7. How much older am I than David? I am already 8 and David is only 1. Can you say that I am 7 years older? I would not. Let me explain. One would have to wait exactly 6 months from February 7 (my birthday) to August 7 (David's birthday). There are 12 months in a year. So 6 months make half a year. So for half a year (from February to August) I am 7 years older than David, but then from August to February I will be only 6 years older than David. I was 6 and a half years old when David was born and he will be 6 and a half years younger forever.

Sometimes I wonder how old the stars are. They are older than I am, because they were up there when I was born. How much older are they? Do they count the years the same way I do?