

FIGURE 6.1 Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development.

Sensorimotor (birth to 2 years)

Doug Goodman / Science Source / Getty Images



Infants explore their world using sensory and motor actions. Object permanence is a major attainment necessary for the next stage. If you distract an infant and remove a toy from his view as shown here, he will not look for it—“out of sight, out of mind”—but an older infant will search for the toy.

Preoperational (2–7 years)

Igor Emmerich/Image Source/Getty Images



One-way thinking is characteristic of this stage. Children at this stage typically show centration. This girl is selecting blocks by shape and ignoring color.

Concrete operational (7–11 years)

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This student learning about weights and measures illustrates the ability of children in this stage to think logically using concrete materials.

Formal operational (11 years to adult)

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This student, who is testing a hypothesis about evaluating which combination of solutions causes a chemical reaction, illustrates the abstract, logico-mathematical thinking of this stage.