

Developmental theories and milestones

Supported GRE teaching and original transfer practice

Identify the evidence

Identify the evidence

Order the major stage theories and their defining tasks

Use the overview measurement lesson VI for research inference.

Concepts 1 (1)

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Piaget's stages are defined by what a child can do. Sensorimotor (birth to about 2): object permanence. Preoperational (about 2 to 7): symbolic play but egocentrism and failure of conservation. Concrete operational (about 7 to 11): conservation and reversible operations on concrete material. Formal operational (about 11 up): hypothetico-deductive reasoning, as in the pendulum task, where the solver holds one factor constant while varying another. Ages are approximate; the reasoning profile defines the stage.

Concepts 1 (2)

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Kohlberg ordered moral reasoning into preconventional (consequences to self), conventional (approval and rules) and postconventional (principles) levels. Erikson framed eight lifespan psychosocial crises, from trust versus mistrust in infancy to integrity versus despair in late adulthood; identity versus role confusion belongs to adolescence. Stage theories describe common sequences, not fixed timetables.

Concepts 2 (1)

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Attachment research uses the strange situation: secure infants use the caregiver as a base and are comforted at reunion; avoidant infants keep distance; resistant (ambivalent) infants cling yet are not easily comforted. Caregiver sensitivity predicts the pattern, and early patterns relate to later relationships without determining them. Theory of mind is understanding that others hold beliefs, including false ones.

Concepts 2 (2)

Concepts 2 (2)

The false-belief task is its standard test: a child who expects a searcher to look where the object really is, rather than where the searcher saw it, has not yet passed. Intentional lying presupposes modelling what another person believes, so deceptive lying marks a change in mental representation.

Reason through the worked case

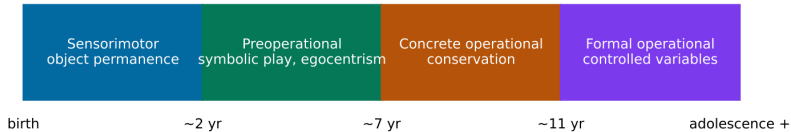
Reason through the worked case

A child calls every four-legged animal a dog, then creates a separate category for cats after contrasting examples. Explain the two processes.

Using the existing dog category for a cat illustrates assimilation. Revising categories to distinguish cats illustrates accommodation. The example concerns changing classification, not proof of a particular stage or the child's general intelligence. Ask for the child's reasoning and test new examples.

Read the reviewed representation

Piaget: stages defined by the child's reasoning (bars not to scale)



Original schematic for Developmental theories and milestones. Illustrative relationships and numbers are not research results.

Attempt an unfamiliar case

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A child predicts that a taller narrow cup has more water after a transfer. Design a question that tests reasoning rather than giving away the answer.

Pause and write the explanation before continuing.

Check the transfer argument

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Ask whether the amount changed and why, then ask what would happen if the water were poured back. Keep the initial amount and transfer visible and avoid evaluative feedback. Reversibility or attention to both height and width would support conservation reasoning; one incorrect answer may also reflect language or task demands.

Accept a different explanation when its evidence and limits are justified.

Limit the conclusion

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Assigning a stage by age alone, or treating a developmental sequence as a fixed timetable; the reasoning profile, not the birthday, defines the stage.

Original classroom cases are not official questions or personal clinical advice.

Check yourself

Independent retrieval

A child succeeds with familiar objects but not an abstract version. How could task demands affect a stage interpretation?

Write your reasoning before comparing it with the methods and limits taught in this lesson.