

## An Overview of Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

STAGE	APPROXIMATE AGE	CHARACTERISTICS	ACTIVITY/PLAY EXAMPLES
Sensorimotor stage Substage 1 <i>Reflexive</i>	first month of life	reflexive activity automatic (unlearned) responses to external stimuli five senses available for input	sucks from the breast feels the texture of her quilt her random movements are symmetrical bangs her hand against the side of the crib gazes at adults
Sensorimotor stage Substage 2 <i>Primary circular reactions</i>	1–4 months	motor activity centered on the body senses available to absorb input coordination of actions establishes simple habits focused on own needs simple anticipation of events some reflexes disappear	repetition of enjoyable actions—sucks many objects stares and touches something at the same time combines grasping and sucking sucks on own hands cries when needs are not met but, initially, without deliberate attempts to get attention
Sensorimotor stage Substage 3 <i>Secondary circular reactions</i>	4–8 months	develops schematic ideas deliberate actions focus on repeating interesting effects direct imitation focused on self simple associations increased physical skills enable infant to handle materials more effectively	reaches for and grasps objects manipulates items repeats interesting or surprising actions copies another baby banging with a wooden spoon links objects by function sits and passes toy from one hand to the other
Sensorimotor stage Substage 4 <i>Coordination of secondary circular reactions</i>	8–12 months	begins to organize schemes intentional behavior goal-directed activity object-permanence physical causality (beginning of problem solving) imitation with alterations anticipates events makes efforts to change events recognizes that others exist but is focused on self	looks for hidden objects shakes rattle in different ways “hides” from Mom at bedtime copies adult putting on a hat but modifies what she has seen reaches for bib at feeding time makes deliberate cries to get attention plays peek-a-boo with older sibling
Sensorimotor stage Substage 5 <i>Tertiary circular reactions</i>	12–18 months	discovers new means through active experimentation combines and extends ideas builds schemes through more complex actions elaborates schemes broader imitation stronger associations (links between objects and ideas)	uses new techniques to be successful in putting shapes through appropriate slots looks in several places for a lost item imitates parts of an adult role discovers the properties of Play-Doh action occurs within a wider physical space, such as organizing self to play in sand at a distance from the adult

*(continues)*

## An Overview of Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development (continued)

STAGE	APPROXIMATE AGE	CHARACTERISTICS	ACTIVITY/PLAY EXAMPLES
Sensorimotor stage Substage 5 <i>Tertiary circular reactions</i> (cont'd)	12–18 months (cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>trial-and-error activity</li> <li>uses increased fine and gross motor skills to reach goals</li> <li>uses some basic symbolism</li> <li>uses simple language</li> <li>extends play experiences to make them more interesting</li> <li>recognizes that others exist but remains focused on self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>puts objects together that belong, such as a number of toy cars</li> <li>points to car and says "car"</li> <li>tries several ways of positioning puzzle pieces to put puzzle together correctly</li> <li>varies the way she performs actions as she experiments with snow</li> <li>activity with junk/found materials, where she combines materials and extends the enjoyment</li> <li>seeks adult help with play task</li> <li>plays alone with a doll</li> <li>watches older children playing</li> </ul>
Sensorimotor stage Substage 6 <i>Internalization of schemes</i>	18–24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mental representation of reality</li> <li>internalizes images of things and past events</li> <li>beginning of true thought</li> <li>deferred imitation</li> <li>make-believe activity</li> <li>complex schematic understanding</li> <li>acceptance of others but remains focused on self</li> <li>early categorization</li> <li>internalizes social behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a variety of strategies to solve the problem of maneuvering a chair into a small space</li> <li>pretends to be mother or father in house play</li> <li>play involves imaginary creatures</li> <li>anticipates the ball emerging from the other end of a tube</li> <li>uses words and simple language to convey needs and ideas</li> </ul>
Preoperational stage	2–3 years (continues through to 7 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>symbolic thought</li> <li>egocentric perspective</li> <li>internalizes roles</li> <li>primitive reasoning</li> <li>deceived by appearances</li> <li>complex deferred imitation and elaboration</li> <li>builds concepts associated with direct experiences</li> <li>make-believe</li> <li>representation of ideas</li> <li>animism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plays alongside others (but without interaction)</li> <li>sorts a few items according to her own criteria—e.g., "things that I like"</li> <li>recognizes objects and people in pictures</li> <li>attempts to soothe another child when she is hurt, in imitation of adult response (not true empathy)</li> <li>plays alongside or with other children, having learned the concept of turn-taking</li> <li>has difficulty in understanding another child's perspective (why she wants the same toy)</li> <li>thinks that another child has more to eat because his portion is spread out over the plate</li> <li>involved in water play, discovers floating and sinking</li> <li>sociodramatic play sequences involving other children</li> </ul>

STAGE	APPROXIMATE AGE	CHARACTERISTICS	ACTIVITY/PLAY EXAMPLES
Preoperational stage (cont'd)	2–3 years (continues through to 7 years) (cont'd)	broader strategies for problem solving transductive reasoning magical thinking constructs own reality categorization using one attribute wide range of conceptualizations: color, weight, size, things that float/sink, what to wear, things to eat, etc. rich imaginative thinking indications of creativity remembers and follows an instruction	paints in ways that express her own ideas and feelings believes that her teddy can hear her talking (animism) thinks that the puppet lady is coming today because it is raining (because when she came last week it was raining) responds positively to request to put item into garbage bin refuses to go to bed without the ritual sequence of story—arrangement of toys on bed—good-night kiss sorts small toys according to color (but forgets the criterion after a period of time)