

Jean Piaget's 4 Stages of Cognitive Development

1. **Sensorimotor:** (*birth to about age 2*)

During this stage, the child learns about himself and his environment through motor and reflex actions. Thought derives from sensation and movement. The child learns that he is separate from his environment and that aspects of his environment -- his parents or favorite toy -- continue to exist even though they may be outside the reach of his senses. Teaching for a child in this stage should be geared to the sensorimotor system. You can modify behavior by using the senses: a frown, a stern or soothing voice -- all serve as appropriate techniques.

2. **Preoperational:** (*begins about the time the child starts to talk to about age 7*)

Applying his new knowledge of language, the child begins to use symbols to represent objects. Early in this stage he also personifies objects. He is now better able to think about things and events that aren't immediately present. Oriented to the present, the child has difficulty conceptualizing time. His thinking is influenced by fantasy -- the way he'd like things to be -- and he assumes that others see situations from his viewpoint. He takes in information and then changes it in his mind to fit his ideas. Teaching must take into account the child's vivid fantasies and undeveloped sense of time. Using neutral words, body outlines and equipment a child can touch gives him an active role in learning.

3. **Concrete:** (*about first grade to early adolescence*)

During this stage, accommodation increases. The child develops an ability to think abstractly and to make rational judgments about concrete or observable phenomena, which in the past he needed to manipulate physically to understand. In teaching this child, giving him the opportunity to ask questions and to explain things back to you allows him to mentally manipulate information.

4. **Formal Operations:** (*adolescence*)

This stage brings cognition to its final form. This person no longer requires concrete objects to make rational judgments. At his point, he is capable of hypothetical and deductive reasoning. Teaching for the adolescent may be wide ranging because he'll be able to consider many possibilities from several perspectives.

Erikson's Psychosocial Stages

Age/Period (approx)	Principal Challenge	Adequate Resolution	Inadequate Resolution
0-1 ½ years	Trust vs. Mistrust: Babies learn either to trust or to mistrust that others will care for their basic needs, including nourishment, sucking, warmth, cleanliness, and physical contact.	Basic sense of safety; ability to rely on forces outside oneself	Insecurity, anxiety
1 ½- 3 years	Autonomy vs. Self-doubt: Children learn either to be self-sufficient in many activities, including toileting, feeding, walking, and talking, or to doubt their own abilities.	Perception of self as agent; capable of controlling one's own body	Feelings of inadequacy about self control, control of events
3-6 years	Initiative vs. Guilt: Children want to undertake many adult-like activities, sometimes overstepping the limits set by parents and feeling guilty.	Confidence in oneself as being able to initiate, create	Feeling of lack of self worth
6-puberty	Competence vs. Inferiority: Children busily learn to be competent and productive or feel inferior and unable to do anything well.	Adequacy in basic social and intellectual skills; acceptance by peers	Lack of self-confidence; feeling of failure
Adolescence	Identity vs. Role Confusion: Adolescents try to figure out, "Who am I?" They establish sexual, ethnic, and career identities, or are confused about what future roles to play.	Comfortable sense of self as a person, both unique and socially accepted	Sense of self as fragmented, shifting, unclear sense of self
Early Adulthood	Intimacy vs. Isolation: Young adults seek companionship and love with another person or become isolated from others.	Capacity for closeness and commitment to another	Feeling of aloneness, loneliness, separation; denial of intimacy
Middle Adulthood	Generativity vs. Stagnation: Middle-age adults are productive, performing meaningful work and raising a family, or become stagnant and inactive.	Focus of concern beyond oneself, to family, society, future generations	Self-indulgent concerns; lack of future orientation
Late Adulthood	Ego-identity vs. Despair: Older adults try to make sense out of their lives, either seeing life as a meaningful whole or despairing at goals never reached and questions never answered.	Sense of wholeness; basic satisfaction with life	Feelings of futility, disappointment