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# Infancy: Beginnings in Cognition and Language

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## Overview

The young infant uses both sensory and perceptive capabilities for early learning. These and innate reflexes are utilized in discovering the world. The child continues learning by adapting new skills of looking, mouthing, handling and manipulating objects. The cognitive learning has its base in relationships and the infant learns early cause and effect within the human interaction. Other means of acting with people and objects around the child soon comes into play. By the first birthday the child uses a wide variety of actions to satisfy curiosity in all types of stimulation with people and places and things. By age two the child is thinking before doing. These magnificent changes are seen in terms of six stages within the sensorimotor period.

The foundations of language the child will soon master and use has its base in the gestures and sounds contained in the interplay with parents and others. The infant has the ability to listen attentively to the language, and from this, gradually understand the sounds, naming and rule system inherent in the language. Within the first year the infant both understands words and phrases and begins to speak his first words.

The parent's role in the learning process is a natural one — playing, interacting and caring for their baby. No extra programming is necessary for a happy, learning and communicative baby.

## Questions To Consider

1. Why are sensory capabilities important in the first year?
2. How do the baby's early relationships impact early learning?
3. How does learning change from birth to one year?
4. Why does an infant cry when a parent goes away after he is about eight months of age?
5. What is the parent's role in the infant's learning?
6. How does the baby learn the language heard?
7. Why can't the baby learn language from television?

## Vocabulary

Read these terms with their definitions before viewing the program.

**Assimilation** Taking in new information using old ways of thinking

**Accommodation** Taking in new information using new ways of thinking

**Baby Talk** A particular way people talk to infants.

**Language System** The sounds, words, rules and meaning of language.

**Object Permanence** The knowledge that objects and people continue to exist when no longer seen.

**Perception** Process of taking in signals from the senses and understanding them.

**Sensorimotor Intelligence** First stage of cognitive development where a child relies on senses and motor activities to learn.

**Signals** Using gestures or sign to communicate ideas

**Symbols** A representation of an object through language, pictures, actions or print.

### Instructional Objectives

When you have successfully completed this module, you will be able to:

1. Describe perception and the early sensory capabilities in infancy.
2. Describe the precursors of early relationships and brain maturation for cognitive development.
3. Define sensorimotor intelligence, assimilation, accommodation, and object permanence.
4. Identify and describe the six substages of sensorimotor intelligence including the timing of each.
5. Describe the gradual development of object permanence.
6. Describe three ways the parent can involve the child in learning during the first year.
7. Place, in sequence, six stages of language development in infancy.
8. Discuss the advances in language made using nonverbal communication.
9. Describe the ways parents provide for language learning in the first year.

### Self-Test

After studying the objectives and watching the video, take the self-test to check your progress.

Select the one best answer for questions 1 and 2.

1. Perception is
  - a. seeing and hearing.
  - b. both taking in from the senses and making sense of them.
  - c. understanding the meaning of another's behavior.
  - d. using most of the five senses.
2. Beginning in infancy the senses are
  - a. developed early and used to understand the child's surroundings.
  - b. starting to be activated.
  - c. activated according to a maturational timetable, hearing being the last to mature.
  - d. developed according to the individual differences of the child.

3. Select the correct term for each of the blanks:  
causality   loving   stimulating   the parent's response   relationships

The beginnings of cognitive development occur within (a)\_\_\_\_\_.

Eventually the baby learns he can cause (b)\_\_\_\_\_ and therefore understands

(c)\_\_\_\_\_.

Therefore the ordinary (d)\_\_\_\_\_ and (e)\_\_\_\_\_ experiences are precursors to the child's cognitive development.

4. Select the correct term for each definition: (Only four terms are used.)

accommodation  
sign  
assimilation  
sensorimotor intelligence  
object permanence  
symbol

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Uses of actions and sensory perceptions to learn about the world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. The process of reshaping new experiences to fit accustomed ways of behaving.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. The process of rearranging existing patterns of behavior to incorporate new knowledge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. The knowledge that an object continues to exist when no longer perceived through the senses.

5. a. Match the description with the substage in sensorimotor development by putting the substage in the correct blank.

- Stage 1 - Reflex Behavior
- Stage 2 - Repetitive Actions
- Stage 3 - Actions with People and Objects
- Stage 4 - Goal Directed Action
- Stage 5 - Experimentation
- Stage 6 - Symbolic Representation

b. Add the age of each stage by placing the age in parentheses:

- first month
- one to four months
- four to eight months
- eight to twelve months
- twelve to eighteen months
- eighteen to twenty-four months

- ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ a. Child thinks of an action before doing it.
- ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ b. Child uses simple inborn patterns of behavior
- ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ c. Child repeats enjoyable actions with a parent.
- ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ d. Child becomes a little scientist.
- ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ e. Child selects which actions to take with an object.
- ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ f. Child puts together two separate actions.

6. Describe the baby's development of object permanence in the first two years.

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7. Describe three ways parents can involve the baby in learning during first year.

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8. Place in order the following stages of language development by placing the number in the space below.

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|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| Imitation | Cooing      | First True Words |
| Crying    | Using Signs | Babbling         |
| a. _____  | b. _____    | c. _____         |
| d. _____  | e. _____    | f. _____         |

