

Definitions and Concepts for AQA Psychology A-level

Option 1: Cognition and Development

Accommodation: Changing a schema to fit new information that would not fit into old schemas.

Assimilation: Adding new information into a pre-existent schema, to make that schema more complex.

Baillargeon's explanation of early infant abilities: A group of explanations to offer ideas of how infants develop cognitive skills.

Class inclusion: The ability to categorise different objects into different groups simultaneously.

Conservation: The ability to understand an object retains the same qualities in spite of the object appearing differently.

Egocentrism: The idea that the only perspective that exists is one's own perspective i.e. whatever the child learns, the child assumes everyone else knows.

Equilibration: When a schema matches the environment.

Object permanence: The ability to understand an object still exists in spite of being outside empirical sense.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development: A theory to explain the stages in cognitive maturity through interaction with the environment and developing a model. There are four stages in this theory: the sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage and the formal operational stage.

Sally-Anne study: A study to test the "theory of mind" in children. A child was to observe two dolls - Sally and Anne - and watch one doll remove or hide an object belonging to the other. The child would then be asked where the latter doll would look for said object. If the child was able to perceive that the doll would look for the object in the place she left it, rather than the place it was now, it suggested that the child had developed "theory of mind".

Scaffolding: A temporary support offered by the person with expertise to the child to give them an area to explore their own competencies and grow more skilled.

Selman's levels of perspective-taking: A theory to explain the cognitive development of understanding various perspectives. According to Selmen, this occurs in 5 levels:

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undifferentiated, social-informational, self-reflective, mutual and societal.

Theory of mind: The ability to comprehend that other perspectives exist, outside of your own.

Violation of expectation research: Research undertaken by Baillargeon to investigate the perception of object permanence by infants. If the infants showed surprise when expecting to see an object reappear, it could be an indicator that the child had developed object permanence.

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development: The theory that cognitive development arises from social support.

Zone of proximal development: A name for skills in a specific area where they are too complex for a child to master by themselves, but they can be mastered with the correct guidance from a person with enough expertise.

