

LEAP INTO ENGLISH

TOEFL PREPARATION COURSE

Read the following text, then answer the questions.

Cognitive Development

The theory of cognitive development that was proposed by Jean Piaget and first published in the 1920s was based on observations and tests that were carried out with children of various ages and were designed to measure intelligence and development of conceptual understanding.

Piaget theorized that children's knowledge and understanding develops as a result of maturation of the brain and develops in the same way in all children, but that intelligence is something that depends on interaction between children and their environment. He concluded that knowledge develops through the construction of progressively more complex concepts.

He proposed four major stages of development that take place at different stages of childhood, and which progress from simple exploration of the environment through the baby's sense of sight, sound, taste, and touch, to symbolic thinking and the ability to understand manipulation of concrete forms and ideas.

One of the main difficulties in researching child cognition is to find ways of measuring how much the child knows, especially with children whose limited language makes it difficult to find out what they are thinking. It is clearly possible for children to develop concepts before they develop the ability to express them in language.

There has since been scientific criticism of the methods that Piaget used to carry out his research, which has cast doubt on the validity of his theories. Although Piaget's research tasks did not necessarily involve language, some of them were conceptually complex from the child's point of view, which may have affected the child's ability to do the task. Another factor he did not take into account was the social context as it has been shown that children easily respond to the hints and cues provided by an adult and may try to give answers that the adult wants or expects.

Notwithstanding the criticisms of Piaget's research methods, his theories have provided the basis for research in the field of cognitive development. Subsequent research has largely supported the conceptual abilities he identified and the sequence and stages of their development, although they may not be as clearly defined as he suggested.

Directions: Answer the questions.

1. The word **progressively** in the passage is closest in meaning to
☐ interestingly. ☐ importantly.
☐ increasingly. ☐ rapidly.
2. According to paragraph 2, children
☐ develop concepts at different ages depending on their environment.
☐ continually develop conceptual knowledge as they get older.
☐ need to interact with people to develop complex conceptual knowledge.
☐ have similar conceptual process to those of an adult.

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3. What is implied in paragraph 4?
- ☐ Children can express complex concepts.
 - ☐ Children can understand concepts that they cannot express.
 - ☐ Children can talk about concepts before understanding them.
 - ☐ Children can talk about concepts they don't understand.
4. The word **which** in the passage refers to
- ☐ research. ☐ criticism.
 - ☐ methods. ☐ theories.
5. Which of the following best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in the passage? *Incorrect* answer choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.
- ☐ The children misunderstood the task.
 - ☐ The researcher misinterpreted the results.
 - ☒ The children were unable to explain their answers.
 - ☐ The researcher influenced the results.
6. Complete the table below by matching five of the six answer choices with the correct category.

Supported by Piaget's theory	Not accounted for by Piaget's theory
☐ _____	☐ _____
☐ _____	☐ _____
☐ _____	☐ _____

Answer choices

1. Children are easily influenced by adults' expectations.
2. Children cannot perform tasks they do not understand.
3. Children's cognitive abilities develop in fixed stages according to age.
4. It is possible to test children's abstract thinking through concrete tasks.
5. Manipulating symbols is evidence of higher level thinking.
6. Stages of cognitive development are affected by various factors.