Piaget’s theory of cognitive development suggests that children progress through universal stages of cognitive development. Each stage is characterised by specific tasks children can and can’t perform. Children go through the stages in an invariant order and at approximately the same age.

In the **sensori-motor stage (0-2 years),** explore the environment using senses, develop motor movement and object permanence. Towards the end of this stage they develop object permanence (the ability to understand that objects exist even when not visually present).

In the **pre-operational stage (2-7 years)** children develop language skills and mental representation of objects and events, is egocentric (only see the world from their point of view. They do not understand that others can see or thin things differently to them) and lacks conservation. This stage is characterised by animism (treating inanimate objects as if they too are alive) and lack of reversibility (the child is unable to work backwards in their thinking).

In the **concrete-operational stage (7-11 years),** children develop the ability to decentrate and conserve (the ability to understand that properties of objects remain the same even when changed in appearance), develop linguistic humour but cannot imagine the world abstractly.

In the **formal operational stage (11+ years)** children are capable of forming and testing hypothesis, understand rules of formal logic and can solve abstract problems.