



Study Unit

Child Growth and Development, Part 1

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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INTRODUCTION

NAVIGATING THIS COURSE

Your study materials are designed so that you can take ownership of your educational goals and schedule and complete your coursework whenever and wherever you can. At Penn Foster, you won't study at the same pace as other students in the same program, but you can reach out to your peers using the Community. Your study materials are broken down into small chunks that are easy to handle, and each section is tied directly to the learning outcomes and objectives. Materials include summaries, reviews, self-checks, and activities to help you master them!

You'll find it easiest to study if you follow the plan outlined below.

- 1 Look over the contents page to get a general idea of what you're going to learn in this study unit.
- 2 Carefully read the pages in Assignment 1.
- 3 Return to the beginning of Assignment 1. This time read more closely and pay careful attention to what you're reading. Focus on main concepts and definitions.
- 4 Complete all exercises as you come to them and check your answers with those provided.
- 5 When you finish reading Assignment 1, complete any exercises at the end of the assignment. The exercises aren't graded; they're designed to help you test yourself to make sure you understand what you've read.
- 6 Complete each assignment in this manner; then review the material in preparation for the examination.
- 7 When you feel confident that you understand the material, complete the examination for this study unit.



INTRODUCTION

COURSE MATERIALS

This course includes the materials listed below:

- Your study units, each of which include
 - ✓ An assignments page
 - ✓ Assignment lessons
 - ✓ An answer key for the lessons



INTRODUCTION

UNIT OBJECTIVES

What will you get from this study unit?

In this course, you'll learn about the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development of young children from birth through school age. You'll study how the environment and biology both affect the growing child and gain practice identifying developmental delays and possible disabilities. You'll also learn developmentally appropriate practices in planning for the success of all children and explore how culture and the family influence a child's learning.

Your study units are an important learning tool; containing the material for the assessments in this course, they're essential resources for your success. Each study unit is divided into multiple assignments. This study unit focuses on how genetics and the environment interact with the physical development of a young child.

The second study unit discusses intellectual, physical, social, cognitive, language, and literacy growth in the young child; the importance of early intervention; and how to respect the cultural diversity of the children and families you work with.

These study units are designed to give you an opportunity to actively engage in a variety of learning activities to promote your understanding of the course material.

It's important to understand the principle concepts of child development to provide effective care and guidance to young children. You'll learn how both the environment and biology affect a child's growth and how to use this information as a caregiver. In this lesson, you'll study various developmental theories and different professional viewpoints regarding growth and development. You'll have the opportunity to learn how children grow intellectually, physically, and emotionally. Most importantly, you'll receive advice from practicing professionals through examples on how to handle a variety of common situations in early childhood.

When you complete this unit, you'll be able to

- ① Describe the factors that influence a child's growth and development
- ② Explain development from the prenatal period to birth
- ③ Compare developmental theories of development
- ④ Apply observation principles in childhood

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ASSIGNMENT 1

A CHILD'S WORLD IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES

When you complete Assignment 1, you'll be able to

1. Describe the factors that influence a child's growth and development

The world has changed dramatically in the last 50 years. In the past, children typically stayed at home with their mothers from birth to their enrollment in nursery school or kindergarten. More recently, economic needs and changing norms have altered this, and the traditional family unit isn't as dominant as it was in the past. A child may live with a single parent, two parents of the same sex, adoptive parents, in foster care, or the care of other relatives. Today, there's an increasing need for child care outside of the home.



Changing the World

Did you know approximately 61 percent of children under age five are in child care outside of the home (Laughlin, 2013)? Explore more about the changing world of today's child [here](#).

SENSITIVE PERIODS OF DEVELOPMENT

The first eight years of a child's life are critical. Studies have shown that during this window of time, young children are especially sensitive to their environment. Brain research confirms that the experiences of young children in the first eight years of life directly affect the development of their thinking ability, emotional stability, personality, and physical growth. It's the period when young children learn to develop trust in adults and confidence in themselves, which happens in an environment where *nurturing* (affectionate care) is consistent and steady. Lack of nurturing and stimulation can cause devastating effects, such as delayed brain development and the inability to bond with others, which can in turn impair the ability of children to form trusting relationships. Research indicates long-term learning disabilities and memory impairments can result from a lack of responsive care and prevent the child from achieving typical developmental milestones.

Developmental milestones are behaviors and skills that children reach during typical development. For example, most children learn to walk by the age of 18 months.

Sensory stimulation (stimulation of the senses) is provided by activities that require infants to use sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch and is particularly vital during the first 24 months of life. This period of growth and development—labeled the *sensorimotor stage* by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget—is the young child’s dependence on his or her senses to explore the world.

Newborn infants are born with tremendous potential for physical, intellectual, social, and emotional growth. Infants’ sensorimotor activities are their primary tools for developing, enhancing, and integrating these skills. By providing activities that use infants’ senses as well as their emerging motor skills, caregivers can promote early childhood learning.

EFFECTS OF TIME SPENT IN CHILD CARE SETTINGS

Research indicates that it’s important for young children to receive consistent sensory stimulation during their first eight years of life in all environments. The average preschool child in the United States spends 33 hours per week in some type of child care setting (Laughlin, 2013). So in addition to their parents, today’s young children must become familiar with several adults outside their families. The differences in adults’ personalities—in their expectations and ways they communicate and interact with children—can make it more difficult for children to develop trust. Besides relating to caregivers other than their parents, young children today also find themselves in large groups of other children. As you learn about the nature of growth and development in this study unit, you’ll become aware of the demands on a young child who spends considerable time in child care.



Caregivers can develop good relationships with children by

- Showing joy with children
- Giving their undivided attention to children
- Learning what’s important to children
- Appreciating the unique participation of each child
- Respecting and showing interest in the individual needs of each child
- Acknowledging each child

EFFECTS OF FAMILY STRUCTURE ON GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Modern variations in family structure include families with biological parents, stepparents, single parents, cohabiting parents, same-sex parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, and children cared for by other relatives. Throughout the past 50 years, the prevalence of these diverse families has increased substantially. The wide variety of family structures that children can live in plays a direct part in their growth and development—affecting nutrition, social skills, emotional stability, character, personality, and thinking ability. To accommodate children’s needs, caregivers must be aware of and sensitive to the diverse needs of each type of family.

Children living with a divorced parent, for example, may believe they were the cause of their parents’ separation and may feel guilt. Or, they may have to assume responsibilities that are inappropriate for their ages.

To provide children with the quality of care and level of nurturing that the first eight years of life demand, you must also be aware of the development that takes place during those years. Once you begin to understand the real meaning of “growing up,” you’ll recognize your real potential for influencing a child’s life (Figure 1).

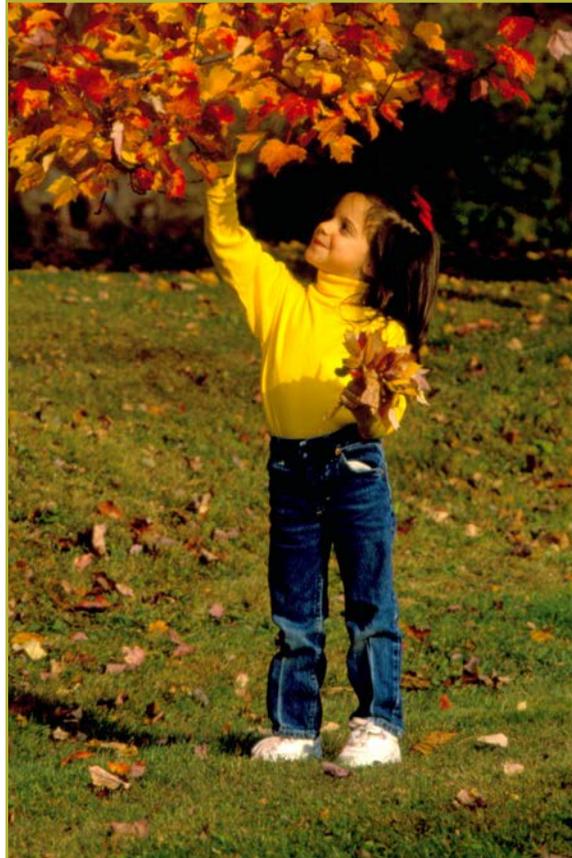


Figure 1—As this child grows, develops, and explores the world, a variety of caregivers will influence her life.

CAREGIVING STYLES

There are two styles of caregiving: responsiveness and demandingness.

- *Responsiveness* is how the caregiver responds to the needs of the child. Responsiveness is shown by
 - ✓ Warm interaction
 - ✓ Knowledge of child development
 - ✓ Patient communication
- *Demandingness* is how the adult uses strategies with the child. Demandingness is manifested in
 - ✓ Rules
 - ✓ Routines
 - ✓ Expectations
 - ✓ Manner of dealing with problem behaviors



Parenting Styles

Why do we study parenting styles? Parenting styles affect children's development and can have long lasting effects. If you're wondering what type of parent your parents were, or what type of parent you are or may be, read the article, "Types of Parenting Styles and How to Identify Yours," [here](#).

You'll now have the opportunity to explore the early years of development. It's increasingly important that all families have access to high-quality child care. As you learn about development, think about how early child care experiences can affect development.



ASSIGNMENT 1

SELF-CHECK

1. The _____ period is the window of time during which young children are especially affected by their environment.

2. _____ is consistent and steady, and provides appropriate role models.

3. What effect can lack of nurturing and responsive caregiving have on young children?

4. _____ is provided by activities that require infants to use their senses.

5. When is sensory stimulation particularly vital?

6. What stage of development emphasizes using the senses to explore the world?

7. How can adults develop trusting relationships with children?

8. What are examples of modern family structure?

9. Caregivers should understand that children with divorced parents might _____ to gain attention.

(Continued)



ASSIGNMENT 1

SELF-CHECK

10. Why is it important for caregivers to understand human growth and development?

11. What kind of stimulation should caregivers provide for infants?

12. Which of the following is an example of sensory stimulation?

- a. A two-year-old taking a nap
- b. A three-year-old singing along with an adult
- c. A six-month-old reaching for, grasping, and mouthing a toy
- d. A caregiver rocking a newborn during a feeding

Click [here](#) to check your answers.

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ASSIGNMENT 2

THE NATURE OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES

When you complete Assignment 2, you'll be able to

2. Explain development from the prenatal period to birth

In the first assignment, you learned about factors that can affect growth and development. All caregivers must possess a basic understanding of human growth and development so that they can provide the highest-quality early learning experiences. In this next assignment, you'll explore the principles of growth and development and learn about the stages of human growth. An understanding of the principles of growth and development will help you to interpret what you observe as you care for children.

Growth is the change that occurs in the size and shape of a human being. For example, the hands and feet of the newborn look thin and flat. Within a few months, however, they take on a rounded and well-padded look as muscles develop. Increases in height and weight are another example of growth. *Development* is the change that occurs in the complexity of a human being. For example, the simple cooing and babbling of the six- or eight-month-old infant leads to the baby's first spoken word when he or she is around one year old. The words *growth and development* are used together to indicate the interactions of changes in size, shape, and complexity, which result in more mature functioning of the child (Figure 2).



FIGURE 2—A child's interests and abilities change and expand at different stages of growth and development.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT: AN ORDERLY PROCESS

Growth and development occur in an orderly and sequential way. The pattern is so orderly that we know what will occur and approximately when it will happen. For example, we can accurately predict adult height from certain measurements taken at birth, and we can expect most children to lose their first “baby” tooth around the same age. This process is *sequential*, which means that one thing must happen before another can follow. Remember the old saying: You have to walk before you can run!

The sequence of development also has direction, cephalocaudal and proximodistal. *Cephalocaudal* means that development occurs from the head downward, toward the toes. For example, a baby develops head control first, then begins to develop control in the remainder of the body. *Proximodistal* means that development of motor skills occurs from the center out. For example, a baby develops the muscles of the chest before the muscles in the hand.

Learning to climb and learning to write are examples of more mature functioning because they include changes in physical as well as mental ability (Figure 3).



FIGURE 3—This child’s ability to climb results from both growth (increase in size) and development (increase in complexity).

FOUR TIME PERIODS AND GROWTH AREAS

Both growth and development are continuous, and each is dependent on the other; however, each of the four major growth and development areas don’t occur at the same rate.

Four time periods that have been identified for growth and development are

- Conception to birth
- Birth to 18 months
- 18 months to 3 years
- 3 years to 8 years

Within each of these time periods, growth and development occur in each of the five major areas: *physical, intellectual, language, emotional, and social (PILES)*. In this study unit, you’ll learn about the first time period, conception to birth, and the dramatic changes

that occur in size, shape, and complexity of a child. In the next study unit, you'll learn what occurs from birth to age eight.

The time between conception and birth is known as the *prenatal* period. During this time, a significant portion of brain development occurs, and it's essential for the mother-to-be to get adequate rest, nourishment, exercise, and prenatal care. It's particularly important that her diet be well-balanced and rich in protein so that the unborn child, or *fetus*, can obtain the nourishment needed for the formation of brain cells.

Research has shown that smoking and the use of alcohol, illicit drugs, and other *teratogens* (substances that may cause birth defects) interfere with optimum brain development, causing a lasting effect. In addition, babies can be born *prematurely*, or before the mother's due date, which can be detrimental to the newborn.

After birth, and for approximately the next 18 months, brain development is rapid. The head of the newborn is relatively large. At birth, it's one-fourth of the total body length; by adulthood, it's about one-eighth of the total body length. Because of proximodistal direction of growth, the internal organs of the body—such as the brain and heart—are fully formed and function prenatally, but the arms and legs aren't fully developed yet. It takes time for large and small muscles to develop and the child's arms, hands, legs, and feet to function in purposeful ways. For example, a newborn can't hold a bottle, but at six to ten months, most infants can.



Watch *From Conception to Birth* for a fascinating look at prenatal development [here](#).

RATE AND TIMING OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The second principle of growth and development is that while development occurs in orderly, sequential ways, each child goes through the process at his or her own rate. There's a wide range of typical variation in the process of development. Caregivers should allow for, expect, and accept this individuality. They shouldn't expect all of the children in their care to walk and talk at exactly the same age (Figure 4).



FIGURE 4—Each child will go through the same process of growth and development, but at his or her own pace.



Read more about “Raising Boys and Girls: Differences in Physical Development” [here](#).

GROWTH SPURTS

The third principle of growth and development is that it sometimes occurs in spurts—especially in infancy, toddlerhood, and adolescence. In these periods, so much is happening that the child seems to change overnight. It becomes difficult for a caregiver to keep up with a child's needs during these growth spurts and to know what to expect. During growth spurts, the body is using so much energy for growing that there may not be much left over for other activities. It's during these times that caregivers often become

frustrated with the child for conditions that aren't within the child's control. For example, toddlers can quickly become tired and hungry and therefore behave in a negative or uncooperative way if they aren't fed and rested.

The fourth principle of growth and development is that human beings are *dynamic energy systems*. This means people constantly use energy to grow, develop, and live.

The amount of energy people have at any one time depends on the rate at which used-up energy is replaced. To replace or replenish energy, people need (1) rest (both sleep and relaxation), (2) recreation or play, and (3) a well-balanced diet. Caregivers need to be sure they provide opportunities for all of these needs to restore and refresh the children for whom they're responsible.

CONCEPTION TO BIRTH: AN OVERVIEW

During the approximately nine months from conception to birth, all that occurs contributes to a fully formed infant. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the growth of the human embryo. The phenomenal growth that occurs during the prenatal period depends upon the environment provided by the mother's body. Everything that the expectant mother does during pregnancy can affect the unborn child's future growth and development. Therefore, the mother-to-be must have proper nutrition, rest, relaxation, exercise, and good general health.

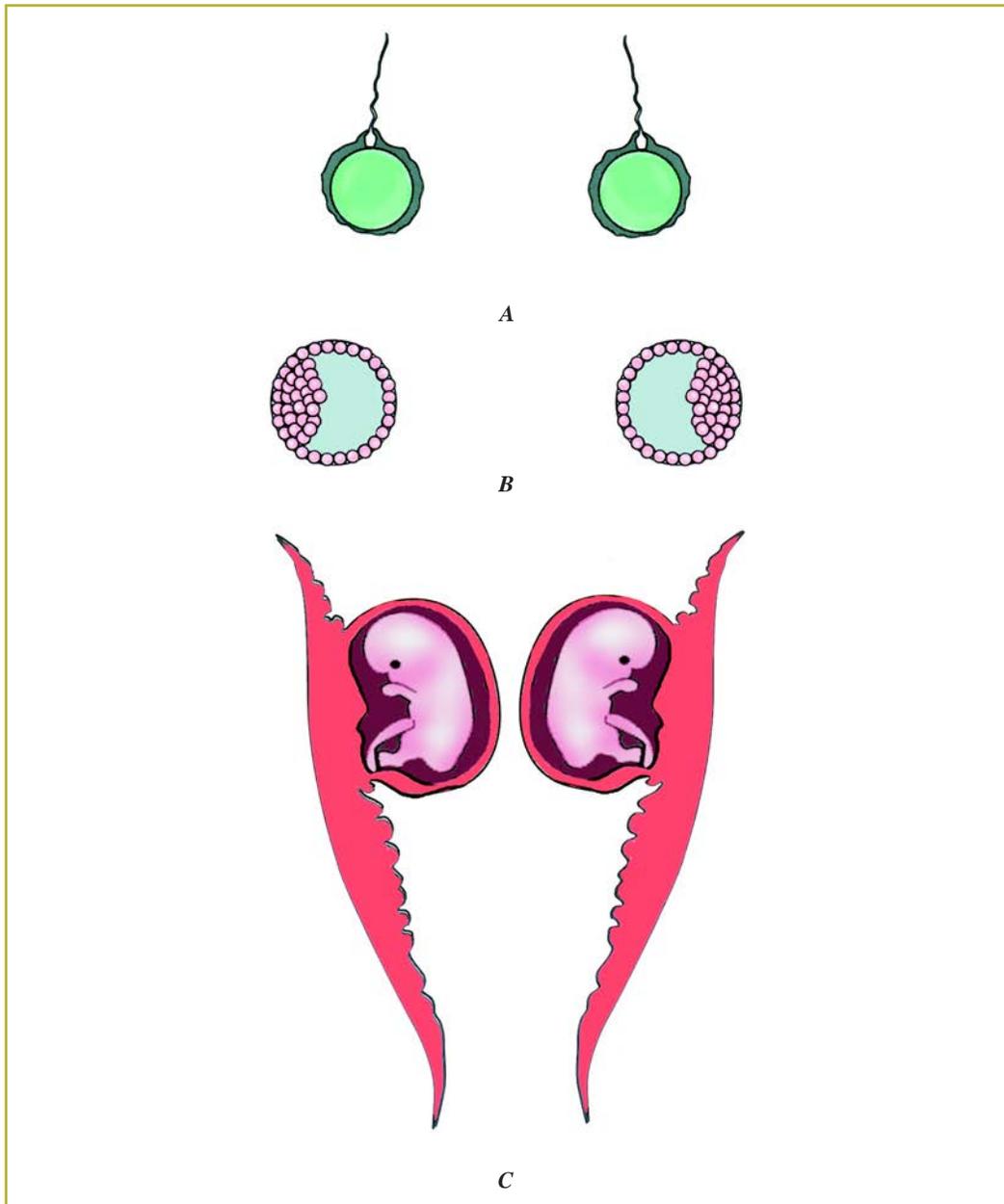


FIGURE 5—Sometimes more than one child is born from a pregnancy. In the case of twins, they may be fraternal or identical. (A) For fraternal twins, two eggs are fertilized by different sperm. (B) Each fertilized egg divides into cells. (C) Each egg develops into a separate individual, each in its own sac. The two separate individuals are fraternal twins.

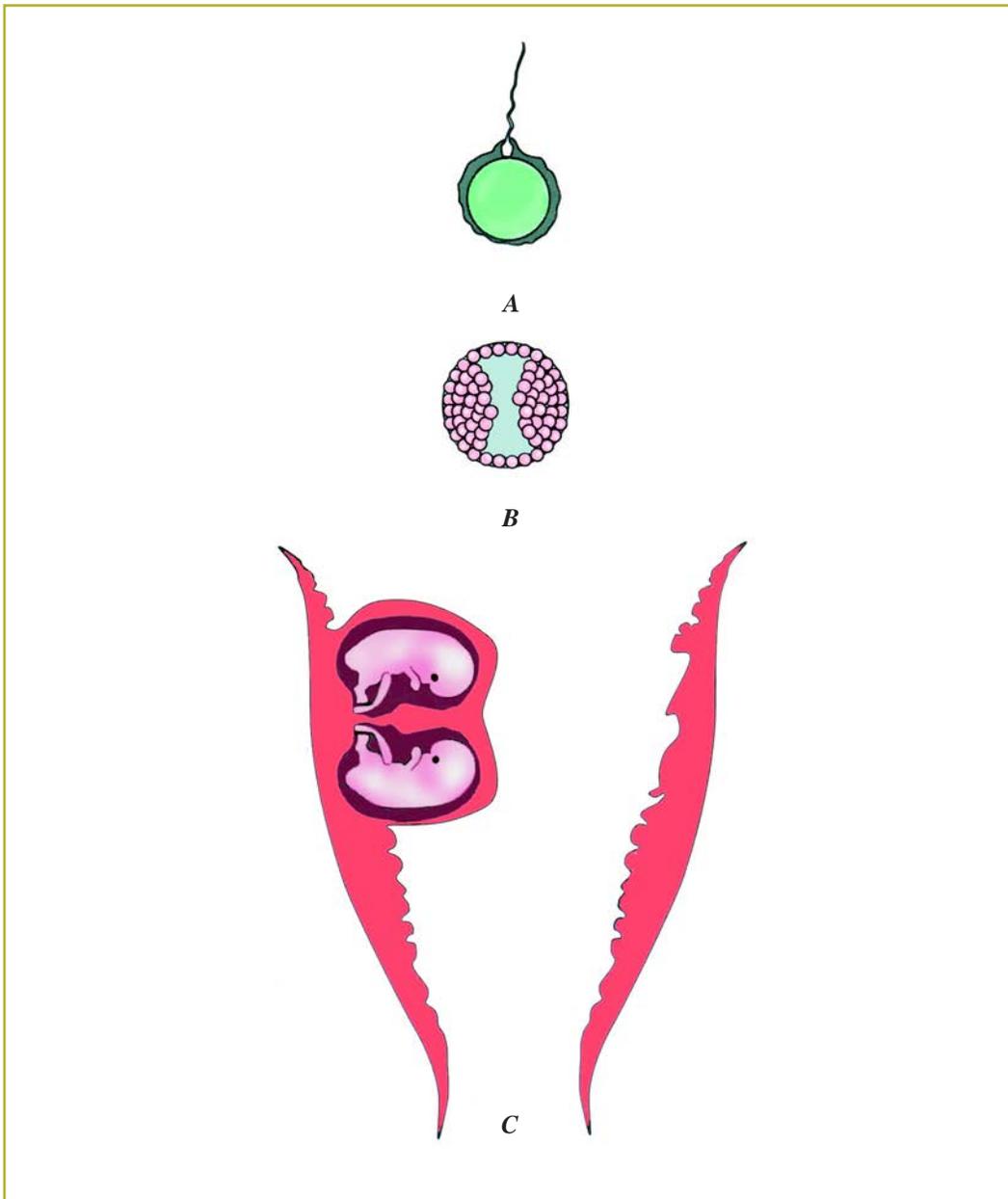


FIGURE 6—(A) One egg is fertilized by a sperm. (B) The embryo of the fertilized egg breaks into two masses of cells. (C) The two masses develop into two nearly identical individuals, who usually share the same embryonic sac. These two separate individuals are identical twins.



Learn more about the importance of prenatal care [here](#).

The expectant mother should receive prenatal care from well-trained professionals throughout her pregnancy. Prepregnancy planning is recommended for a healthy start. It's critical for pregnant women to avoid teratogens, including illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and other environmental substances such as lead paint and some chemicals. Avoidance of teratogens helps reduce the possibility of problems with the pregnancy and later issues in growth and development.



Have you ever wondered if any moment of alcohol consumption is safe for the unborn child? Maybe you've heard a friend or relative say, "My doctor said it was okay for me to have a glass of wine to relax during my pregnancy." Watch this [video](#) to find out why any amount of alcohol is known to be unsafe for the growing fetus. Learn more at the Centers for Disease Control [website](#).

BONDING

Researchers spend a lot of time and money studying infant development to determine the best environment for the growth of a fetus and of a baby once born. Research has shown that an important element of a newborn's environment is a *bond*, or attachment, with the primary caregiver. The primary caregiver can be a parent, child care professional, other relative, or any other caring and consistent adult. Bonding helps a baby to develop trust that the environment is a safe, secure place in which the child can grow, change, and know that his or her needs will be consistently met. When babies and their caregivers have time together immediately following birth, the bonding process occurs more completely. Feeding is another excellent time to develop bonds. Maintaining eye contact is one way that infants develop social skills during feeding.

When a newborn baby enters the world, they're entirely dependent on others for survival. The growth and development that occur during the first 18 months of life are dramatic in scope and complexity. During this period, the baby, a tiny being who spends most of the time sleeping, waking only when disturbed by the sensations of wetness and hunger, grows to become a sturdy-looking toddler who is walking and beginning to talk (Figure 7). Bonding is extremely important to this growth and to help the child develop independence and security.



FIGURE 7—Like butterflies emerging from the cocoon, babies become independent creatures in their first year.

You've learned about the importance of prenatal care and how growth and development occur in the period from conception to birth. In the next assignment, you'll learn how theory impacts the growth and development of young children.



ASSIGNMENT 2

SELF-CHECK

1. What's the term for growth that proceeds from head to toe?

2. What's the term used for growth from central organs to the extremities?

3. Why is it important to hold infants during feeding time to provide warm, nurturing human interaction?

(Continued)



ASSIGNMENT 2

SELF-CHECK

4. Who are primary caregivers that can help infants develop a basic sense of trust?

5. One way that very young infants respond to social interaction is by

- a. turning away.
- b. maintaining eye contact.
- c. falling asleep.
- d. sucking.

6. Why is prenatal care important?

7. What's a teratogen?

8. Discuss the use of alcohol during pregnancy.

Click [here](#) to check your answers.

3

ASSIGNMENT 3

THEORIES ABOUT GROWTH AND DEVELOPEMENT

ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES

When you complete Assignment 3, you'll be able to

3. Compare developmental theories of development

In the previous assignment, you learned about the growth and development of the embryo to the birth of the infant. In this assignment, you'll learn about theories explaining how children grow, develop, and learn. There are many differing theories concerning what determines optimum growth and development of children. A good theory describes, explains, and predicts behavior. As a child care professional, you should possess a basic understanding of generally accepted theories so that you can use this information in your work and form your own point of view.

THE NATURE-NURTURE CONTROVERSY

You inherited characteristics from your parents—like the color of your hair, eyes, and skin. Your parents passed these traits to you through complex molecular structures called *genes*, and the total of these inherited characteristics is your *genetic inheritance* (Figure 8).



FIGURE 8—*This child inherited some physical traits from her parents through genes.*

Once you're born, you're exposed to the environment—the people and world around you. Positive environments are enriching to a child—filled with varied and new learning experiences with many opportunities for love and nurturing. On the other hand, a negative environment not only lacks learning opportunities and nurturing; it may include harmful elements, such as second-hand smoke.

Which is more important in determining the person you'll become—*nature* (genetic inheritance) or *nurture* (interactions with the environment)? This question has created the ongoing *nature versus nurture controversy*, which evaluates both factors and the importance of their interactions with each other. Genetic inheritance may be confused with the nurturing effect of the environment.



Pedro is tall for his age, has brown eyes and black hair, and looks like his father. These physical traits are part of his genetic inheritance. Pedro also loves to play kickball just as his father did when he was a boy. At first, one might think that Pedro's love of kickball is an inherited trait. Actually, Pedro's environment and the people who interact with him have encouraged him to play kickball by teaching him how to play and giving him attention and praise whenever he plays it. The people in his environment have nurtured Pedro's love of kickball.

Experts don't all agree on the role of genetics and the environment, but it's clear that both are important in the development of the child. Early childhood professionals can influence both nature and nurture by encouraging prenatal care and avoidance of teratogens prior to birth, and ensuring an enriching environment after birth. Head Start and Early Head Start programs were developed to help meet this need.



ASSIGNMENT 3

REFLECT AND RESPOND

NATURE VERSUS NURTURE

Have you weighed the arguments for nature versus nurture? Which do you think has more influence on the developing child? Or do you think they have equal influence? Which do we as early childhood professionals have more control over?

PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORIES

The point of view of *psychodynamic theories* is that growth and development result from *psychological* (the mental and emotional state of a person) needs which we may not be aware of. These needs originate in our earliest experiences while relating to our parents and caregivers, providing unconscious motivation for our behavior. It's believed that these experiences are very significant to our growth and development throughout life.

Sigmund Freud's *psychoanalytic theory* proposed that personality was the most important aspect of development. This theory suggests that human relationships, especially the mother-child relationship, have the greatest influence on development. Erik Erikson's *psychosocial theory* expanded on Freud's theory. Erikson, a German psychologist, proposed that human development occurs in a series of stages, and each stage represents a critical period during which individuals must solve developmental tasks. Accomplishments of each stage are based on the development of previous stages. Healthy personality development is characterized by a balance between satisfaction of personal needs and requirements of social and cultural settings.

BEHAVIORAL THEORIES

Behaviorists believe that individuals grow, develop, and change when they're rewarded for their actions. The reward can be as simple as a smile or as substantial as a gift.

Behaviorism is based on the view that learning results from interaction with the environment. Behavior is understood in terms of stimulus and response, and learning may be the result of *conditioning*, or the process of training behavior. A stimulus that strengthens a behavior is a *reinforcer*.

Behavior modification stresses the use of rewards rather than punishment. *Positive reinforcement* is the rewarding of desirable behavior. Undesirable behavior is ignored, if possible.

Observational learning, or modeling, is especially powerful in young children. *Social learning theory* is a point of view that suggests children learn by observing models whom they imitate. The point of view of the social learning theory is that changes in a human being result from the individual's exposure to certain situations and the learning that results from those situations.



Given a spoon, a baby explores and examines it and tries to use it in a variety of ways. The baby learns to use the spoon appropriately with the caregiver's help. The caregiver serves as a model for the baby to imitate.

HUMANISTIC THEORY

According to *humanistic theory*, the self-concept is the most important aspect of the individual's growing and developing in a positive and complete manner.

Self-concept is the mental image you have of yourself, including your unique wishes, wants, desires, and fears. Humanists believe self-concept is the main source of change that brings about growth and development.

BIOLOGICAL THEORIES

These points of view offer explanations for growth and development that focus on biological factors. The *maturation theory* provides information about common characteristics of children at different ages. The study of temperament provides a helpful perspective from which to understand differences in human behavior.

Temperament is a relatively consistent manner of interaction that affects a person's behavior. It's based on biological characteristics and is evident in early infancy. These characteristics influence the nature of the relationship between child and caregiver. For example, the kind and amount of attention given to a "slow-to-warm-up" baby is quite different from that received by an "easy" baby.

CONTEXTUAL THEORIES

These theories center on the child as a member of a social environment.

Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget are two of the most famous educational researchers whose theories are based on culture. Vygotsky is well known for his theory of *socio-constructivism*. *Scaffolding* is used to help a child develop a new skill in the zone of proximal development, where new learning takes place. For example, in a preschool classroom where a child is having difficulty with social skills, the teacher can model the desired behavior by saying, "Vivian, please tell Roberto that you'd you would like a turn playing with the truck when he's finished." Vygotsky also discussed the importance of decreasing supports so that a child can accomplish skills independently.

Piaget is known for his recommendation that children must be actively involved in the environment. In his theory, known as *constructivism*, children's knowledge develops in four stages:

- 1. Sensorimotor Stage (approximately birth–2 years).** Babies learn about the world through motor activities and coordinating movements based on learning about their bodies. An example of how babies construct knowledge in this stage is through *object permanence*, or when the baby begins to realize that an object still exists even when not in sight.
- 2. Preoperational Stage (approximately 2–6 years).** Children begin to use symbols in their learning, though they're egocentric in their thinking. Children in the preoperational stage consider situations mostly from their point of view.
- 3. Concrete Operations Stage (approximately 6–12 years).** Children in this stage exhibit logical thinking when using concrete objects. For example, the child now understands *conservation*, or that a pile of blocks spread out have the same number as the same pile of blocks stacked closely together.
- 4. Formal Operations Stage (approximately 12+ years).** Children in this stage can understand abstract ideas and think about a variety of ways to solve problems. For example, hypothetical situations can be understood in this stage of development.

Piaget also discussed the idea of *assimilation*, which is where children place new information into their existing conceptual frameworks. *Accommodation* occurs when a child needs to change his or her existing ideas and concepts.



Watch this [video](#) to learn more about the development learning theories of Piaget and Vygotsky.

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN POINT OF VIEW

You've been introduced to theories on human growth and development in this assignment. Theories can help you understand what you see when you observe children and enable you to know what to expect from others, both children and adults. In the next assignment, you'll learn about the importance of observation in early childhood.

It's important to use theory on how children grow and develop while you work with children in your care. You may wish to learn more about the theories discussed and other viewpoints of growth and development, and can do so by visiting reliable websites or your local library. As you research, you'll find yourself accepting some ideas and rejecting others. You'll also add your own ideas and experiences with children to this knowledge until you arrive at your own point of view.



ASSIGNMENT 3

SELF-CHECK

1. A child's temperament is primarily influenced by _____ factors.
 - a. emotional
 - b. environmental
 - c. social
 - d. biological
2. The sensorimotor stage is characterized by the infant's need to explore the world through his or her
 - a. hands.
 - b. eyes.
 - c. motor activity.
 - d. senses.
3. The sensorimotor stage occurs from
 - a. birth to 2 years.
 - b. 2–6 years.
 - c. 6–12 years.
 - d. 12 years to adult.
4. Vygotsky is known for _____ theory.
5. Behaviorists believe that the _____ shapes behavior.
6. _____ is the mental image you have of yourself.
7. _____ is the stage when children begin to use symbols in their learning, though they're egocentric in their thinking.
8. _____ is a relatively consistent manner of interaction that affects a person's behavior.

Click [here](#) to check your answers.

4

ASSIGNMENT 4

THE ROLE OF OBSERVATION

ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES

When you complete Assignment 4, you'll be able to

4. Apply observation principles in childhood

In Assignment 3, you learned the importance of learning theories on child growth and development. In this assignment, you'll learn the value of observing this growth and development in early childhood. It's possible to learn a great deal by observing children, so it's important for caregivers to learn how to observe behavior and development objectively and methodically. Assignment 4 will help you learn more about how to observe children's behavior and record your observations clearly, accurately, and objectively.

DIRECT OBSERVATION

Children communicate through behavior. Directly observing their behavior can tell us the who, what, where, when, and why of the behavior, and data can be collected in a *narrative format*—much like a story. Examples of narrative formats are running records and anecdotal records. *Non-narrative formats* include checklists, rating scales, event sampling, and time sampling.



“Preschool Assessment: A Guide to Developing a Balanced Approach,” from the National Institute for Early Education Research, is an excellent resource and can be found [here](#).

THE PROCESS OF OBSERVATION

Your knowledge and understanding of children is probably based on experiences from your own childhood and children you've known. Since some of the information presented in this assignment may be different from what you already know, it's important to be open to learning new ways to observe children.

Observation isn't just watching children; it's scientifically looking at behavior and development. It's a way to obtain information on children that's objective and current. It takes training and practice to become a skilled observer, and it's important to observe children in a variety of settings over time to get different kinds of information.

A caretaker performs observations for several reasons:

- To learn more about children and their growth and developmental patterns
- To understand children better and meet their needs
- For assessment purposes
- To be able to communicate with parents about their children's behavior and development

BECOMING AN OBJECTIVE OBSERVER

As you observe and record children's behavior, you'll have to learn how to separate what you actually see from what you *interpret* (what you think or believe). This is called being *objective*. *Objective observations* are observations that report only what you actually see, without any interpretation or assumptions made by the observer.

For example, an observer sees and reports the following incident:

Four-year-old Darnell grabs a book out of three-year-old Tia's hands. He tells her he wants that book. She begins to cry.

That's what the observer actually observes.

Interpretations or assumptions made by the observer as to what the child is feeling or the child's likes and dislikes are called *subjective observations*. For example, the observer records:

Four-year old Darnell looks *angry* as he grabs a book out of three-year-old Tia's hands. He says in a *mean* voice that he wants that book. Tia looks *scared* and begins to cry.

Do you see the difference? In the first observation, only the actual facts were recorded. In the second, interpretations of the actions were made as revealed by words such as *angry*, *mean*, and *scared*. These are considered interpretations because what the observer perceived as angry, someone else may perceive as simply stern; what the observer thought was a scared look, another person may interpret as a startled look.



ASSIGNMENT 3

REFLECT AND RESPOND

OBJECTIVE VERSUS SUBJECTIVE OBSERVATIONS

Can you think of additional examples of the difference between objective and subjective observations?

It's important that you record both kinds of observations and recognize the difference between them (Figure 9). Remember: Recording what you hear and see is a demonstration of *objective* observation. Interpreting what you see is *subjective* observation.



FIGURE 9—How would you objectively and subjectively report these boys' demeanors?

After practicing with a significant number of objective observations, you can start to see whether there's a recognizable pattern of behavior. Your subjective observations will help you come to conclusions about behavior, and also help you to evaluate your growth in interpreting this behavior. Looking back at a number of earlier objective and subjective observations, you might begin to recognize behavior patterns that you didn't see at the time of observation.



***Naturalistic observation* takes place in the child's natural environment, which is a good place to assess children's everyday behavior.**

OBSERVATION EXAMPLES

Carefully study the examples of child behavior observation records in Figure 10. First, read each objective observation. Then, read the corresponding subjective observation. Finally, read the conclusion.

The first record concerns a brief incident. The second and third observation records have complex situations of longer duration. Notice the form that's used in these observations: Objective observations are separated from subjective observations. Also, note that the observer has made some general interpretations at the end, which reflect a discussion of the meanings of the behaviors.

OBSERVATION REPORT

CHILD: Suzannah, age 3

DATE: June 18, 20—

PLACE: Neighbor's kitchen

TIME: 4:30 p.m.

Objective

Suzannah (who lives nearby) knocks loudly on neighbor's door, shouting, "Anybody home?" Neighbor, who is shelling peas, goes to door, and lets in Suzannah.

"What are you doing?" "Shelling peas." "Can I do it?" "Yes." Suzannah thrusts out her lower lip as she opens her first pod. Her mouth opens and a smile forms, as she puts the peas in the bowl and looks up at the neighbor. "You can eat some if you'd like." Suzannah holds one up, looks at it, smells it, puts it in her mouth. "Mm, good."

She continues shelling peas (getting better and better at the task), occasionally eating one, looking to see if the neighbor is watching.

Conclusions

Suzannah enjoys interacting with adults. She is ready to try new experiences. She will stay with and repeat a task until she improves her ability to do it.

Subjective

Suzannah is energetic. She apparently is accustomed to visiting her neighbor.

Suzannah enjoys "helping" and experiencing new sensations—feeling, watching, smelling, and tasting.

Suzannah is aware that she must "behave" at her neighbor's house.

OBSERVATION REPORT

CHILD: Lisa, age 2

DATE: December 1, 20—

PLACE: Laundromat

TIME: 12 noon

Objective

A young girl (about 2) is carrying a plastic candy wrapper. She is smiling. A little boy grabs the wrapper from her. She yells. The boy's mother takes the wrapper and returns it to the girl, who smiles as she takes it.

The girl's mother comes over and takes the wrapper, saying, "Lisa, where did you get this?" Lisa starts crying when her mother throws the wrapper in a trash can and returns to her laundry chores. Lisa tries to get the paper out of the can, almost falling into the can. She emerges with the paper and a smile.

Another woman, at the opposite end of the laundromat, attracts Lisa's attention by talking to her. Lisa giggles, waves her wrapper, and runs towards the woman.

Lisa's mother calls her, but she ignores her. Her mother goes and gets Lisa. This happens three times, while the mother is busy.

The last time the mother retrieves Lisa, she gives her a bottle and goes to use the pay phone. When she is returning, Lisa run to her, throws the bottle on the ground, grabs her mother at the knees, and hugs her.

Conclusions

Physically, Lisa walks and runs well and is able to do things by herself. She shows healthy development because of her zest and joy with her increasing skills.

Emotionally, she is self-centered and easily distracted. She is becoming independent and enjoys physical affection. Socially, she engages in solitary play and cannot deal effectively with other children without adult guidance.

Intellectually, Lisa has a short attention span, but is curious about exploring and manipulating her surroundings. She understands object permanence.

Subjective

The girl appears happy until her wrapper is taken away, but happiness returns when the wrapper is returned.

Lisa disobeys her mother to get what she wants.

Lisa appears to like adults and reacts favorably to their attention.

Lisa is an energetic child; her joy in running is not diminished by her mother's actions.

Lisa is happy with her mother (although she has just about worn her out) and wants physical affection.

OBSERVATION REPORT

CHILD: Cindy, age 6 or 7

DATE: November 9, 20—

PLACE: Grocery store

TIME: Approx. 5 p.m.

Objective

A girl of 6 or 7 carries a puppy like a baby. She tells her mother not to forget the dog food. Mother says, "That's right, Cindy. That's what we came for." They walk to the dog food aisle, Cindy following her mother and struggling to hold the puppy. A woman in the aisle (the observer) asks Cindy where she got such a cute puppy. Cindy smiles and says, "I just got him. His name is Tuffs. I'm gonna take him home and feed him and keep him until he grows up to be a dog and not just a puppy."

Cindy wrestles to get a tighter hold on Tuffs. Her mother smiles at the woman and turns back toward the canned puppy food. Cindy says, "Tuffs wants that for dinner" (pointing to a bag of puppy food). Her mother asks "How about a bone for him to chew on?" Cindy asks Tuffs, "Do you want a bone, Tuffs?" She answers her mother, "Tuffs wants a bone." Her mother nods, puts the package in the basket, and says, "Let's go pay for these and then we can take Tuffs home."

Cindy's mother walks to the checkout aisle. Cindy follows, still struggling to hold Tuffs. He seems to be getting heavy for her. Cindy asks if they have enough food for the dog. Her mother says yes.

Subjective

Cindy is very proud of her new puppy. She is treating it as a baby.

Cindy's mother understands the importance of the puppy to her daughter.

Cindy doesn't want to lose the puppy, so she won't let go of it.

Cindy shows pride again with her new pet. She takes credit for it and makes it seem more like a person by giving it a name. She is pleased with it.

Cindy still will not let go of the puppy. She is taking responsibility for it.

Cindy pretends to know what her dog wants and what the dog tells her, again increasing her responsibility for it.

Cindy's mother gets involved in the child's play. Cindy again treats the dog as a child.

Cindy is following her mother's direction. She won't let go of Tuffs for fear he will run away.

Cindy is still concerned about Tuffs.

(Continued)

OBSERVATION REPORT

Objective

Cindy looks at the woman behind them in line. She turns around so that person can't see Tuffs well and juggles to get a better hold on Tuffs.

When Cindy and her mother get to the checker, Cindy watches Tuff's food being bagged.

As they head for the door, Cindy asks where Tuff is going to sleep.

Subjective

Cindy is possessive of the dog and is suspicious of strangers who are looking at the dog. She still won't let go of the dog, despite difficulty.

She wants to make sure the bagger takes care of Tuff's food.

Cindy is still thinking about Tuffs.

Conclusions

Socially, Cindy appears home-centered and likes to associate with her mother. She also enjoys responsibility, as shown by her nurturing of the puppy—carrying it, talking to it, protecting it from strangers, choosing its food, and planning its sleeping quarters.

Intellectually, most of Cindy's thinking is egocentric (self-centered) as revealed by her repeated use of the word "I." She associates time with aging and understands that puppies become dogs after a while.

Physically, Cindy is developing coordination and strength. She holds the dog for an extended period. She demonstrates her ability to do more than one thing at a time.

FIGURE 10—Examples of Child Behavior Observation Records

As you become a more objective observer, you'll discover that you're learning more about the children you observe. This knowledge will help you link theory with practice. You'll use the knowledge for program planning, to help solve problem behavior, and to help parents.

RECORDING OBSERVATIONS

There are many ways of making records of children's behavior, and each can serve a different purpose. Some records include a lot of details, while others may be checklists or charts. In any format, records should give a full and realistic picture of a child. The key to having good observational records is to use detailed language that defines and describes the children's behavior accurately and clearly. Use of specific verbs, adjectives, and adverbs describe how a behavior occurs.



You're observing Isaiah, a three-year-old, and you're recording your observations about his fine motor skills. He's sitting at a child-sized table using scissors for the first time. What detail should you include in your observation? Be sure to include descriptions of body movements, facial expressions, tone of voice, and duration of behaviors. These details in observations give a verbal picture of the child and make it more authentic.

TIME AND PLACE

Your observations should include a variety of settings and times, because records that are made over time can show patterns of behavior and development. It's also important to observe children with other children and adults present, because children can act differently when alone than when with others. They also act differently at different times of day. Thus, you should observe children at home, at child care locations, at public places, alone, and with others. If your only task is to observe, make yourself as inconspicuous as possible. Being an unobtrusive observer is critical, because children also act differently when they know they're being watched.

How could you make yourself inconspicuous during an observation?

- Sit off to the side of the room and out of the flow of traffic.
- Avoid eye contact with children.
- Try not to talk to the children.

If you're working in a classroom, your presence is natural, but you may be so busy that it's difficult to observe. You need to train yourself to always observe. When something noteworthy happens, make a note of it. Have paper and pencil handy (in a pocket or on a shelf) that you can use to jot down a few notes and write a complete record as soon as you have time. Sometimes it's not possible to make notes. Teach yourself how to make mental records, and then make a written record as soon as possible.



Observations of children are a source of data on how they learn. Early childhood professionals can use this data on how children learn to improve early education. Learn more about how early childhood data is used [here](#).

MULTIPLE OBSERVATIONS

Observations should become a part of your everyday life and something that you do whenever possible. As you record more and more observations, you'll find that your observations will become more accurate and useful (Figure 11). Once you become a caregiver, you can apply your observations to your work with children. You can also use your observations to keep accurate child care records and to communicate with parents about their children's needs. For these purposes, you can use the format shown previously in Figure 10. When using any form for child care records and communicating with parents, include the child's full name, birth date, date of observation, and your name as the observer.



FIGURE 11—To learn more about human behavior, observe children of a variety of ages, at various places, and in various situations.

USING INFORMATION FROM OBSERVATIONS

Assessment in early childhood is a very important process and should help you make decisions about your care of children. *Assessment* is the process of gathering and recording data about young children's development and learning to identify a child's strengths (Figure 12). Authentic assessment is an important way to assess young children.



Please watch the video, *What is Authentic Assessment?*, found [here](#).

A caregiver is responsible for providing children with a warm, safe, and loving environment while they're away from their parents. To fulfill that responsibility, the caregiver must understand human behavior and be able to provide an environment that meets the developmental and individual needs of children. For example, an observation in the second record of Figure 10 refers to how the two-year-old understands object permanence. The observer could use this understanding to enlarge a child's vocabulary by hiding an object, such as a doll, and then asking the child, "Is the doll under the table? Behind the bookcase? In the refrigerator?"



FIGURE 12—Assessing how well a child plays with others, for example, can be an important part of data you record.

The caregiver could also use observations to meet individual needs. For example, your recorded observations of five-year-old Erica indicate that while in your care, she spends most of her time looking at books. She gathers as many books in her lap as she can at one time and proceeds to look through each one, page by page, from beginning to end. A sensible and nurturing act on your part would be to find out if Erica is actually reading the books. You might ask her if she'd like you to read one of the books to her or if she'd like to read one to you. If it turns out that Erica can read, be sure to provide her with ample opportunities to use that skill. If she can't quite read yet, but is eager to learn, give her the sort of help that will be productive and not frustrating. A simple procedure might be to read stories to her, omitting some of the simple, familiar words and inviting her to "fill in" the omitted words, pointing to them as she says them. Erica will then begin to accumulate a sight vocabulary.

PROBLEM SOLVING

You may observe that a child is having difficulty getting along with other children. Your observations over a couple of weeks show that most problems occur just before lunch. You might decide to introduce a quiet time just before lunch as a transition—a calmer, slower pace may help if fatigue is the problem. If hunger is the problem, another solution is required. Sometimes you'll find that most of the conflicts happen in one particular area of the classroom. You could then evaluate that area—is it too small? Too large? Are there too many learning activities? Too few? The process of problem solving is important when observing children.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Once you know how to observe and record children's behavior, you'll be in a position to communicate effectively with their parents about their progress while in your care. Remember that most parents love their children and do their best to help them grow up. Also keep in mind that parents are sensitive about their children's behavior, because they consider it a reflection of themselves. If you need to discuss a child's behavior with his or her parents, do it in privacy so that the parents can feel as comfortable as possible.



Learn more by watching this [video](#), *Engaging Families with Video at Parent-Teacher Conferences*

A caregiver is a significant person in the parent's life as well as the child's. As a caregiver, you'll spend a great deal of time with the child and have a lot of information to share with the parent that will be helpful to parent-child interaction. Be gentle in developing your relationship with parents. Remember that they've entrusted their child to your care. If you earn their trust, you'll share a partnership with the parents that will be beneficial to the children, the parents, and yourself.



ASSIGNMENT 4

REFLECT AND RESPOND

CASE STUDY

You go to pick up your child from day care after a frustrating day's work and an hour's travel from your workplace through bumper-to-bumper traffic. You're anxious to get home, eat some dinner, and relax. The caregiver greets you by saying, "Am I glad to see you! What a difficult day we've had with your boy!"

- How would you feel?
- Would you want to discuss the matter further, then and there, with the caregiver?
- Will you be happy to see your son?

Most people would be unhappy with such a greeting. It's not designed to gain parent's respect or cooperation. It would have been better to say, "Landon will be so happy to see you. He has had a tiring day and is anxious for you to hug him and take him home. When you have some time, please call me and we'll talk some more."

CONFIDENTIALITY

You must be careful to follow a fundamental rule when recording children's behavior: Keep this information confidential. You must protect the children's right to privacy, so keep your observations in a secure place. When you aren't using your records, they should be locked in a drawer or a file cabinet. You can certainly share and discuss your observations with other staff members who interact with the child, but this should be done in a private setting. It's never okay to share any information about a particular child in your care with the parents of other children or with the other children in your care; this is an inexcusable breach of confidentiality. Also, be sure to never share any information about children in your care or their families on social media. It's important to maintain professional confidentiality at all times.

In this unit, you've learned about children's growth and development, theories of learning, and observing and recording children's development and behavior. In the next lesson, you'll learn about the specific developmental milestones for each age and how to individualize activities to reach the diverse needs of all children.



ASSIGNMENT 4

SELF-CHECK

1. Running records and anecdotal records are a form of _____ records.
2. The key to detailed and objective observational records is
 - a. taking many notes.
 - b. use of subjective language.
 - c. making subjective interpretations.
 - d. being conspicuous.
3. The most important reason caregivers should observe children is to
 - a. be able to tell parents what their children do each day.
 - b. help them decide which children cause problems in the group.
 - c. learn about their growth and development and find ways to meet the needs of individual children.
 - d. keep a written record for future use.
4. Observational records provide more helpful information when they
 - a. are made over time.
 - b. are short.
 - c. describe behavior subjectively.
 - d. focus on problem behavior.
5. To be an unobtrusive observer, you should
 - a. sit close to children.
 - b. interact with children.
 - c. stay out of the flow of traffic.
 - d. avoid writing down notes.

(Continued)



ASSIGNMENT 4

SELF-CHECK

6. Knowledge from observations can be used to
- learn about children.
 - help plan your program.
 - communicate with parents.
 - all of the above

7. What should you base your objective observations on?

8. What types of records can you use to record your observations?

9. Why is it important to be as inconspicuous as possible when observing children?

10. Where should you keep written observations to protect the child's right to privacy?

Click [here](#) to check your answers.



CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, PART 1

KEY POINTS AND RESOURCES

To prepare for your examination, please review these key points:

- The changing structure of the modern family affects children's learning as families have become more diverse.
- Growth and development occur in an orderly and sequential way.
- Learning about theories of development gives you the opportunity to make decisions about how you think children learn best.
- It's important to observe children with objective and detailed notes.

RESOURCES

Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements:

<http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2013/demo/p70-135.pdf>

Types of Parenting Styles and How to Identify Yours

<https://my.vanderbilt.edu/developmentalpsychologyblog/2013/12types-of-parenting-styles-and-how-to-identify-yours/>

From Conception to Birth

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ltmwtLCDVY>

Raising Boys and Girls: Differences in Physical Development

http://www.babycenter.com/0_raising-boys-and-girls-differences-in-physical-development_3659011.bc

Prenatal Care Fact Sheet

<http://womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/prenatal-care.html>

Alcohol Effects on the Developing Brain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37YTRamQZvQ>

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/>

Piaget & Vygotsky in 90 Seconds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yY-SXM8f0gU>

Preschool Assessment: A Guide to Developing a Balanced Approach

<http://nieer.org/resources/factsheets/12.pdf>

The 10 ECE Fundamentals

<http://www.ecedata.org/the-10-ece-fundamentals/>

Engaging Families with Video at Parent-Teacher Conferences

<http://www2.cde.state.co.us/media/resultsmatter/RMSeries/EngagingFamiliesWithVideo.asp>



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