

	Vygotsky	Piaget
Sociocultural Context	Strong emphasis	Little emphasis
Constructivism	Social constructivist	Cognitive constructivist
Stages	No general stages of development proposed	Strong emphasis on stages (sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational)
Key Processes	Zone of proximal development, language, dialogue, tools of the culture	Schema, assimilation, accommodation, operations, conservation, classification
Role of Language	A major role; language plays a powerful role in shaping thought	Language has a minimal role; cognition primarily directs language
View on Education	Education plays a central role, helping children learn the tools of the culture	Education merely refines the child's cognitive skills that have already emerged
Teaching Implications	Teacher is a facilitator and guide, not a director; establish many opportunities for children to learn with the teacher and more-skilled peers	Also views teacher as a facilitator and guide, not a director; provide support for children to explore their world and discover knowledge

Figure 7 Comparison of Vygotsky's and Piaget's Theories
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pitfalls. Might facilitators be too helpful in some cases, as when a parent becomes overbearing and controlling? Further, some children might become lazy and expect help when they could do something on their own.

Information Processing

Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories provided important ideas about how young children think and how their thinking changes. More recently, the information-processing approach has generated research that illuminates how children process information during the preschool years (Braithwaite & Siegler, 2018a, b; Chevalier, Dauvier, & Blaye, 2018). What are the limitations and advances in young children's ability to pay attention to their environment, to remember, to develop strategies and solve problems, and to understand their own mental processes and those of others?

Attention

Recall that we defined *attention* as the focusing of mental resources on select information. The child's ability to pay attention improves significantly during the preschool years (Wu & Scerif, 2018). Toddlers wander around, shift attention from one activity to another, and seem to spend little time focused on any one object or event. By comparison, the preschool child might be observed watching television for half an hour.

Young children especially make advances in two aspects of attention: executive attention and sustained attention (Bell & Cuevas, 2015). **Executive attention** involves planning actions, allocating attention to goals, detecting and compensating for errors, monitoring progress on tasks, and dealing with novel or difficult circumstances (McClelland & others, 2017; Schmitt & others, 2017). **Sustained attention**, also referred to as *vigilance*, is focused and extended engagement with an object, task, event, or other aspect of the environment (Benitez & others, 2017). Research indicates that although older children and adolescents show increases in vigilance, it is during the preschool years that individuals show the greatest increase in vigilance (Rothbart & Posner, 2015).

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