



Activity 2: Suggested Answers

Task Answers

1. Watch this short clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jW668F7HdA>

The baby in the video is given two tasks – firstly, her mum shows her a toy and then hides it under a blanket. The baby lifts the blanket and finds the toy. How does this provide support for the idea that babies understand object permanence?

The baby does not seem to think that because the toy disappeared it ceased to exist – this is evident as the baby searches for the toy under the blanket, suggesting that she understands that the toy still exists even when it goes out of view. If she thought the toy was gone, she wouldn't search for it.

2. In the second part of the video, the toy is hidden under one of two blankets – the baby lifts the blanket on her right-hand side the first time, but then when the toy is hidden under the blanket on her left she still reaches for the one on her right. Do you think this shows that babies don't actually understand object permanence? Or is there another explanation as to why the baby looked for the toy under the wrong blanket?

It's important to remember that the babies being tested are very young! Even though they seem to fail the blanket test, at this age they're still learning to co-ordinate their movements. It might be that the baby realises the object is under the other blanket now but doesn't have the capacity to stop herself from reaching for the same blanket as last time. Interestingly, babies who start to crawl/walk are more successful at this task than babies who aren't yet moving on their own – this suggests that learning to walk might improve body co-ordination, which helps babies to reach for the right blanket.

3. Which method do you think is better when testing infants – looking at an infant's behaviour, or examining their looking behaviour?

For similar reasons as outlined in the answer above, it seems that babies 'realise' what the correct answer is, before they can act in the correct way. They're still learning to co-ordinate their movements, they need to learn self-control, inhibition and resistance to distraction and so their actions might not be in line with their reasoning about the world. They might *want* to act one way but end up doing something else because of distractions or lack of inhibition. Therefore, studying infant gaze, rather than infant actions, seems like a better way of testing infants.