

AGE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF REFLECTIVE THINKING  
IN CHILDREN AGED 5–6 YEARS

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**Annotation:** This article examines the development of reflective thinking in children aged 5–6 and its psychological–pedagogical foundations. At this age, children begin to form initial reflective skills such as analyzing information, understanding cause-and-effect relationships, recognizing mistakes, and justifying their thoughts. Drawing on the research of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Elkonin, the article highlights the characteristics of the preoperational stage and key factors influencing metacognitive development. It emphasizes that the formation of reflective thinking serves as an essential foundation for children's intellectual and social growth.

**Keywords:** reflective thinking, ages 5–6, cognitive development, analysis, cause-and-effect, preoperational stage, psychological–pedagogical features.

The modern education system is aimed at fostering a well-rounded individual who can think independently and is capable of creating innovations. The preschool age, in particular, is a crucial stage during which the main psychological and physiological foundations of a person are formed. Therefore, creative thinking should develop at this stage as one of the key indicators of a child's intellectual potential. Creativity is the ability to approach problems in an unconventional way, generate new ideas, and view existing events from a different perspective. Such potential is effectively developed not only in intellectually capable children but also in those who are physically and psychologically healthy and well-rounded.

Children aged 5–6 years fall into a crucial stage of psychological development in the preschool period. During this time, a child's perception, memory, speech, thinking, and socio-emotional development accelerate significantly. In particular, reflective thinking—the ability of a child to understand, evaluate, and analyze their own thoughts, actions, and knowledge—begins to form. According to the research of psychologists L.S. Vygotsky, D.B. Elkonin, and J. Piaget, the age of 5–6 years is considered the period when the initial forms of reflection emerge.

Developing thinking abilities in children aged 5–6 involves various pedagogical and psychological characteristics. Some key aspects to consider include:

**Concrete operational thinking:** At this age, children begin transitioning to pre-operational to concrete operational thinking. They start to understand concepts such as **conservation** (the understanding that the quantity of a substance remains the same even if its appearance changes) and **classification** (the ability to group objects into different categories based on shared characteristics).

**Reflective thinking** is a complex mental activity that involves processes such as evaluating one's own actions, recognizing and correcting mistakes, justifying one's thoughts, understanding the perspectives of others, making choices, and explaining reasons. Although reflection is not fully developed at the age of 5–6, its fundamental mechanisms are actively maturing.

At this age, there is a noticeable intensity in the development and formation of skills and abilities, which lays the foundation for exploring the external environment. Such indicators of cognitive development, especially in terms of visual-motor thinking, can be considered a “**preparatory stage**” for reflective thought. This, in turn, helps the child develop the ability to form concepts and understanding based on facts during the process of exploring both the surrounding environment and external phenomena.

**Cognitive characteristics of reflective thinking development in children aged 5–6**

The ability to analyze and synthesize strengthens at this age. A child can separate objects and events into distinct features, recombine them, and attempts to compare and generalize. This process is a fundamental component of reflective thinking.

The understanding of cause-and-effect relationships also develops. Children aged 5–6 actively seek the reasons behind events. They try to answer questions such as, “Why didn’t I win?”, “Why did the car stop?”, or “Why did the toy break?”. This requires them to analyze their own thinking processes.

The skill of justifying one’s thoughts begins to emerge. Children not only respond to questions but can also give simple explanations when asked, “Why do you think so?”. This represents the initial verbal form of reflection.

At ages 5–6, thinking and cognitive characteristics are gradually being formed. According to Piaget’s theory, children at this age are in the preoperational stage, which is characterized by the development of symbolic thinking, although they are not yet able to perform fully abstract logical operations.

**Symbolic thinking:** Children perceive objects and events symbolically and express them through play or storytelling.

**Egocentrism:** Children often think based on their own perspective and may not fully understand the viewpoints of others.

**Centration:** Focusing attention on a single aspect, such as the shape or size of an object, while temporarily neglecting other aspects.

**Limited understanding of conservation:** Children cannot yet fully grasp that the size or quantity of an object remains constant even if its shape changes.

**Limited reversible thinking:** The ability to mentally perform opposite operations has not yet fully developed.

At the age of 5–6, reflective thinking gradually develops, forming the child’s ability to understand, analyze, and regulate their own thinking processes. At this stage, children attempt to recognize and correct their mistakes—for example, during play or tasks, they may ask themselves, “What went wrong?” They begin to try different strategies and select the most effective methods.

At the same time, the understanding of cause-and-effect relationships becomes more active: children try to answer questions such as, “Why did this happen?” or “Why didn’t I win?” Verbal forms of reflective thinking also develop: children start to explain their thoughts, even if in a simple manner. This process enhances their metacognitive abilities and is also reflected in social interactions—children attempt to understand the perspectives of others during play and communication and adjust their actions accordingly. Thus, in children aged 5–6, reflective thinking is a crucial process that integrates their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

In summary, it can be said that reflective thinking in children aged 5–6 plays an important role in their psychological, cognitive, and social development. At this age, children begin to understand, analyze, and regulate their own thoughts, identify their mistakes, and attempt to correct them. They start exploring cause-and-effect relationships in various situations and learn to explain their thoughts, even if in a simple manner. In identifying the pedagogical and psychological characteristics of developing thinking abilities in 5–6-year-old children, there are various approaches in pedagogy. While none of these approaches fully organize the process, they can reveal certain aspects of it.

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