UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

TAKE YOUR PLACE

Activity 1: Suggested Answers

Task Answers

1. **Psychologists measure infants' gaze to gather evidence for their studies. Come up with a method which could be used to measure how long an infant looks at something (which equipment would you need? Outline all the steps you would need to take).**
   If you thought of an answer along the lines of 'use a timer', then you're on the right track! However, psychologists would probably use a more precise measure, as recording time manually can lead to biased findings – if you're expecting / hoping that the baby will look longer at something, you may be a little bit slower at pausing the timer (this can happen unconsciously). The results would therefore be affected by experimenter bias.

   A better approach would be to record the babies whilst they are performing a task, and to then measure how long they spent looking at things with the help of a computer. Even better – get someone else to measure looking time, someone who doesn't know what the aims of the experiment are!

   Psychologists also use something called an eye-tracker (pictured) to record eye movements – they're a cool piece of kit but are quite expensive.

2. **Do you think it's even worthwhile to study what infants might be thinking/expecting? Why / why not?**
   I would say that doing anything which helps us to understand the world a bit better is always worthwhile! We can try to understand what infants know about the world, to help us work out how the brain develops. Are we born knowing things about the world? Or do we need to learn everything from a scratch? For example, as children (7+) and adults we are very good at understanding the intentions of others, what their thoughts might be, why they might be doing certain things and so on. But, when does this skill develop? Testing young infants can help us to answer this question (and many others). In fact, the rest of this resource will answer these specific questions in more detail.