

TERMS AND CONCEPTS TO REMEMBER

Using your own words, on a piece of paper write a brief definition or explanation of each of the following terms.

1. learning
2. associative learning
3. stimulus
4. operant conditioning
5. law of effect
6. operant chamber (Skinner box)
7. reinforcement
8. shaping
9. positive reinforcement
10. negative reinforcement
11. primary reinforcer
12. conditioned reinforcer
13. reinforcement schedule
14. continuous reinforcement
15. partial (intermittent) reinforcement
16. fixed-ratio schedule
17. variable-ratio schedule
18. fixed-interval schedule
19. variable-interval schedule
20. punishment
21. respondent behavior
22. operant behavior

Terms and Concepts to Remember

1. **Learning** is the process of acquiring new and relatively enduring information or behaviors.
2. In **associative learning**, organisms learn that certain events occur together. Two variations of associative learning are classical conditioning and operant conditioning.
3. A **stimulus** is any situation or event that evokes a response.
4. **Operant conditioning** is a type of learning in which behavior is strengthened if followed by a reinforcer or diminished if followed by a punisher.
Example: Unlike classical conditioning, which works on automatic behaviors, **operant conditioning** works on behaviors that operate on the environment.
5. E. L. Thorndike proposed the **law of effect**, which states that behaviors followed by favorable consequences are likely to recur, and that behaviors followed by unfavorable consequences become less likely.
6. An **operant chamber (Skinner box)** is an experimental chamber for the operant conditioning of an animal such as a pigeon or rat. The controlled environment enables the investigator to present visual or auditory stimuli, deliver reinforcement or punishment, and precisely measure simple responses such as bar presses or key pecking.
7. In operant conditioning, **reinforcement** is any event that strengthens the behavior it follows.
8. **Shaping** is the operant conditioning procedure for establishing a new response by reinforcing successive approximations of the desired behavior.
9. In operant conditioning, **positive reinforcement** strengthens a response by *presenting* a typically pleasurable stimulus after that response.
10. In operant conditioning, **negative reinforcement** strengthens a response by *removing* an aversive stimulus after that response.
11. The powers of **primary reinforcers** are inborn and do not depend on learning.
12. **Conditioned reinforcers** are stimuli that acquire their reinforcing power through their association with primary reinforcers; also called *secondary reinforcers*.

13. In operant conditioning, a **reinforcement schedule** is a pattern that defines how often a desired response will be reinforced.
14. **Continuous reinforcement** is the operant procedure of reinforcing the desired response every time it occurs. In promoting the acquisition of a new response it is best to use continuous reinforcement.
15. **Partial (intermittent) reinforcement** is the operant procedure of reinforcing a response intermittently. A response that has been partially reinforced is much more resistant to extinction than one that has been continuously reinforced.
16. In operant conditioning, a **fixed-ratio schedule** is one in which reinforcement is presented after a set number of responses.
Example: Continuous reinforcement is a special kind of **fixed-ratio schedule**: Reinforcement is presented after *each* response, so the ratio of reinforcements to responses is one to one.
17. In operant conditioning, a **variable-ratio schedule** is one in which reinforcement is presented after a varying number of responses.
18. In operant conditioning, a **fixed-interval schedule** is one in which a response is reinforced after a specified time has elapsed.
19. In operant conditioning, a **variable-interval schedule** is one in which responses are reinforced after varying intervals of time.
20. In operant conditioning, **punishment** is the presentation of an aversive stimulus, such as shock, which decreases the behavior it follows.
Memory aid: People often confuse negative reinforcement and **punishment**. The former strengthens behavior, while the latter weakens it.
21. **Respondent behavior** is that which occurs as an automatic response to some stimulus.
Example: In classical conditioning, conditioned and unconditioned responses are examples of **respondent behavior** in that they are automatic responses triggered by specific stimuli.
22. **Operant behavior** is behavior that operates on the environment, producing consequences.