

Unit 7: Learning

Big Question: What is learning? What type of learning is most important and/or effective?

Learning Objectives:

- *Discuss the nature and importance of learning and describe how behaviorism approached the study of learning.*
- *Describe the general process of classical conditioning.*
- *Explain the process of acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization, and discrimination.*
- *Discuss the biological and cognitive constraints on different types of learning.*
- *Describe the process of operant conditioning, including the process of shaping.*
- *Identify the different types of reinforcers and describe the schedules of partial reinforcement.*
- *Discuss the effects of punishment on behavior.*
- *Describe the process of observational learning and discuss the effects of antisocial and prosocial modeling.*

Learning Overview

“No topic is closer to the heart of psychology than learning, a relatively permanent change in an organism’s behavior due to experience.” The Learning chapter covers the basic principles of three forms of learning: classical, or respondent conditioning, in which we learn associations between events; operant conditioning, in which we learn to engage in behaviors that are rewarded and to avoid behaviors that are punished; and observational learning, in which we learn by observing and imitating others.

The chapter also covers several important issues, including the generality of principles of learning, the role of cognitive process in learning, and the ways in which learning is constrained by the biological predispositions of different species.

Key Terms

Using your own words, write a brief definition or explanation of each of the following. Feel free to be as succinct as possible as long as the definition makes sense to you. Do this after or while reading the assigned pages for class.

1. classical conditioning -
 - a. Ivan Pavlov -
 - b. unconditioned stimulus (UCS) -
 - c. unconditioned response (UCR) -
 - d. neutral Stimulus (NS) -
 - e. conditioned Stimulus (CS) -
 - f. conditioned Response (CR) -
 - g. acquisition -
 - h. extinction -
 - i. spontaneous recovery –
 - j. generalization -
 - k. discrimination -
 - l. cognitive processes of Classical Conditioning -
 - m. biological predispositions of classical conditioning -
 - n. John Garcia studies -
2. operant conditioning -

- a. positive reinforcement -
- b. negative reinforcement -
- c. positive punishment -
- d. negative punishment -
- e. limitations of punishment -
- f. Thorndike's Law of Effect -
- g. Skinner box -
- h. shaping -
- i. primary reinforcer -
- j. conditioned (secondary) reinforcer -
- k. cognitive map -
- l. latent learning -
- m. overjustification effect -
- n. cognitive processes of operant conditioning -
- o. biological predispositions of operant conditioning -
- p. schedules of reinforcement -
 - i. continuous reinforcement –
 - ii. partial reinforcement -
 - 1. fixed-ratio -
 - 2. variable-ratio -
 - 3. fixed-interval -
 - 4. variable-interval -

3. observational learning -

- a. modeling -
 - i. prosocial behavior -
 - ii. antisocial behavior -
- b. Albert Bandura's Bobo Doll Study -