

Reinforcement vs. Punishment

Notice how many ways operant conditioning occurs in our everyday lives.

A. For each example below identify the type of consequence. Remember, in each case a consequence is something that follows a behaviour. Consequences may increase or decrease the likelihood (in the future) of the behaviour that they follow.

For example:

PR (positive reinforcement) - something good is presented, which encourages the behaviour in the future

NR (negative reinforcement) - something bad is removed or avoided, which encourages the occurrence of the behaviour.

PP (positive punishment) - something bad is presented, which discourages the behaviour in the future.

NP (negative punishment) - something good is removed, which discourages the behaviour in the future.

_____ Police stop drivers and give them a prize if their seatbelts are buckled; seat belt use increases in town.

_____ A basketball player who commits a flagrant foul is removed from the game; his fouls decrease in later games.

_____ A soccer player rolls her eyes at a teammate who delivered a bad pass; the teammate makes fewer errors after that.

_____ The annoying child jumps up and down, hand raised, yelling "Me, me, me!" until the teacher calls on her. The child jumps and yells even more in the future.

_____ After a good workout in physical therapy, hospital patients are given ice cream sundaes. They work harder in later sessions.

_____ Homeowners who recycle get to deduct 5% from their utility bill. Recycling increases after this program begins.

_____ After completing an Alcohol Education Program, the suspension of your driver's license is lifted. More DUI drivers now complete the program.

_____ After Jodi flirted with someone else at the party, her boyfriend stopped talking to her. Jodi didn't flirt at the next party.

_____ The employee of the month gets a reserved parking space. Employees now work harder.

- ___ A dog is banished to his doghouse after soiling the living room carpet. The dog has fewer accidents after that.
- ___ A teacher allows those students with 90% averages in the class to skip the final exam. Students work harder for 90%.
- ___ You clean up your stuff more regularly now to avoid your or mother's nagging.
- ___ You've learned a particular response in your videogame gets rid of one of the "bad guys". You now always respond that way at the appropriate time.
- ___ Making just the right facial expression always makes your best friend laugh when he/she is mad at you. You make that facial expression more often now.

B. Should parents spank their children? Why or why not? Use the principles from this class to form your opinion.

C. List behaviours (at least 3) that cause your parents grief. Using reinforcements and punishments, come up with a plan to change the behaviours.
