

On Reinforcers and Reinforcement

REINFORCEMENT in operant conditioning refers to the “act” of either presenting a **POSITIVE REINFORCER** following a behavior to increase its rate of occurrence as in **POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT** or, ...

AVOIDING or ESCAPING from a **NEGATIVE REINFORCER** as in **NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT**.

In **PUNISHMENT**, one may either withhold a **POSITIVE REINFORCER** or directly administer a **NEGATIVE REINFORCER**. In either case, the rate of occurrence of some behavior is diminished, lessened or stopped outright.

Reinforcers may be **PRIMARY**, in which case they are unlearned and are biologically based whereas **SECONDARY** reinforcers acquire their ability to reinforce through learning.

POSITIVE REINFORCERS		NEGATIVE REINFORCERS	
PRIMARY	SECONDARY	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
food	money	electric shock	rejection
water	grades	intense heat	failure
sex	status	pain of any sort	criticism
warmth	praise	suffocation	avoidance