

Operant Conditioning Key Word List


Dr. Anthony A. Walsh, Introduction to Psychology

reinforcement - a procedure to make a behavior pattern, or response, more likely to be repeated under similar circumstances in the future.


reinforcer - a stimulus that will increase the rate of occurrence of a response when it is delivered or removed contingent upon it.

response - any behavior that is capable of being emitted by an organism and can be observed by others.

emitted behavior - behavior that occurs spontaneously, purposefully, not reflexively.

negative reinforcer - a stimulus that an organism will work to get away from. 

positive reinforcer - a stimulus that an organism will work to get.


negative reinforcement - a procedure of removing a negative reinforcer as a consequence of behavior. 


positive reinforcement - a procedure of presenting a positive reinforcer as a consequence of behavior.

shaping - in operant conditioning, the procedure of positively reinforcing successive approximations of a final goal behavior.

magazine training - in a Skinner Box, *Classically Conditioning* an animal to associate the SOUND of the magazine food dispenser with food, a primary reinforcer.

CRF - *continuous reinforcement*, rewarding a behavior every time it occurs.

PRF - *partial reinforcement*, rewarding behavior on some PARTIAL schedule. PRF schedules include *Fixed* and *Variable Ratio* and *Fixed* and *Variable Interval* schedules. 

operant conditioning - a circumstance in which a three-way contingency is established between an *antecedent condition*, a *behavior*, and a *consequence*, the key element of which is the bond created between all three, aka, "Psychology's A,B,Cs" 

superstitious behavior - in operant conditioning, the circumstance in which an organism falsely associates a stimulus consequence (usually positive) with a behavior when in reality the consequence was not contingent on the behavior and, in fact, was occurring completely independent of it.

chaining - the procedure used to teach complex behaviors by operantly conditioning smaller components of the final goal behavior and then "chaining" them together through further conditioning.