

REINFORCEMENT

Reinforcement is the process in which a behaviour is strengthened by the immediate **consequence** that reliably follows its occurrence. When a behaviour is strengthened, it is more likely to occur again in the future.

Low of effect

Reinforcement

Response ->consequence

The rat presses the lever -> immediately food is presented.

1. The occurrence of a particular behaviour
2. is followed by an immediate consequence
3. that results in the strengthening of the behaviour (The person is more likely to engage in the behaviour again in the future)

A behaviour that is strengthened through the process of reinforcement is called an **operant behaviour**. An operant behaviour acts on the environment to produce a consequence and, in turn, is controlled by, or occurs again in the future as a result of, its immediate consequence. The consequence that strengthens an operant behaviour is called a **reinforcer**.

P O S I T I V E A N D N E G A T I V E R E I N F O R C E M E N T

Both positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement are processes that strengthen a behaviour.

Positive reinforcement is defined:

1. The occurrence of a behaviour
2. is followed by the addition of a stimulus (a reinforcer) or an increase in the intensity of a stimulus,
3. which results in the strengthening of the behaviour.

Negative reinforcement is defined:

1. The occurrence of a behaviour
2. is followed by the removal of a stimulus (an aversive stimulus) or a decrease in the intensity of a stimulus,
3. which results in the strengthening of the behaviour.

Social reinforcement vs. automatic reinforcement

For both positive and negative reinforcement, the behaviour may produce a consequence through the actions of another person or through direct contact with the physical environment. When a behaviour produces a reinforcing consequence through the actions of another person, the process is **social reinforcement (You! Turn off the TV!)**

When the behaviour produces a reinforcing consequence through direct contact with the physical environment, the process is **automatic reinforcement (I turn off the TV).**

One type of positive reinforcement involves the opportunity to engage in a high probability behaviour (a preferred behaviour) as a consequence for a low-probability behaviour (a less-preferred behaviour), to increase the low-probability behaviour. This is called the **Premack principle (high probability behaviour reinforces the low probability behaviour).**