**OPERANT CONDITIONING**

In operant conditioning (also a type of associative learning), people and animals learn to do certain things—and not to do others—because of the results of what they do. In other words, they learn from the consequences of their actions.

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|  | Procedure | Result |
| **Operant Conditioning** | Behavior is followed by either a **reinforcer**  or **punisher** | The behavior increases or strengthens if followed by a **reinforcer**. It weakens or diminishes if followed by a **punisher**. |
| **Example** | When a child cleans his room, his parents read him a story (reinforcer) | The child cleans his room more often, so as to hear more stories |
| **Related Concepts**:  **Shaping**—reinforcers gradually guiding behavior closer towards desired behavior  **Primary reinforcer**—an innately reinforcing stimulus, such as one that satisfies a biological need (different from secondary reinforcement)  **Conditioned/Secondary reinforcer**—stimulus that gains reinforcing power because of association with a primary reinforcer  **Positive reinforcement**—a stimulus that when *presented*, strengthens a response (ex. Giving a dog a teat, giving money for payment)  **Negative reinforcement**—a stimulus that when *removed*, strengthens a response (ex. Painkillers to end pain, fasten seat belt to end beeping)  **Punishment**—an event that tends to decrease the behavior that it follows  **Reinforcement schedule**—pattern that defines how often a desired response will be reinforced  **Continuous reinforcement**—reinforcing the desired response every time it happens  **Partial/intermittent reinforcement**—reinforcing the desired response only part of the time, creates slower acquisition, but slower extinction  **Fixed ratio schedule**—a reinforcement schedule that reinforces a response only after a specific number of responses  extinction  **Variable-ratio schedule**—reinforcement schedule that reinforces a response after an unpredictable number of responses  **Fixed-interval schedule**—a reinforcement schedule that reinforces a response only after a specified time has elapsed  **Variable-interval schedule**—a reinforcement schedule that reinforces a response at unpredictable time intervals | | |
| **Famous studies**: B. F. Skinner and rats in a box (also known as operant chamber or Skinner box) | | |

