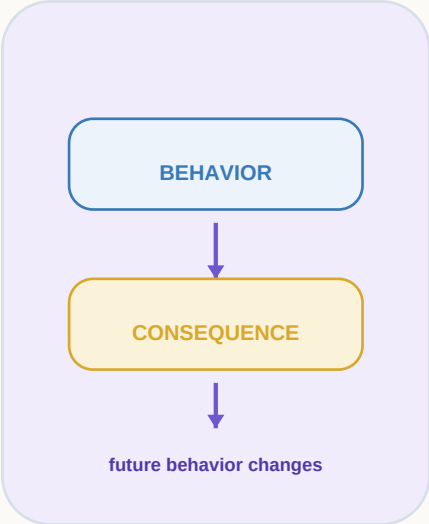
AP PSYCHOLOGY | UNIT 3

TOPIC 3.8

Operant Conditioning

Consequences shape voluntary behavior by changing how likely that behavior is to happen again.



THE LAW OF EFFECT

REINFORCEMENT

Behavior becomes more likely.

PUNISHMENT

Behavior becomes less likely.

BY THE END, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO...

1. Classify positive and negative reinforcement and punishment.
2. Explain shaping, primary and secondary reinforcers, and learned control.
3. Distinguish continuous, partial, ratio, and interval schedules.

BIG IDEA

Judge a consequence by its effect on future behavior - not by whether it sounds pleasant, unpleasant, positive, or negative.

1 Classify consequences with two questions

First ask add or remove. Then ask whether the behavior increases or decreases.

THE 2 x 2 CONSEQUENCE MATRIX

	ADD A STIMULUS	REMOVE A STIMULUS
INCREASE BEHAVIOR	**POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT** Add praise -> studying increases	**NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT** Remove alarm -> seatbelt use increases
DECREASE BEHAVIOR	**POSITIVE PUNISHMENT** Add penalty -> behavior decreases	**NEGATIVE PUNISHMENT** Remove phone -> late work decreases

POSITIVE = ADD **NEGATIVE = REMOVE** Neither word means good or bad.

REINFORCERS AND SHAPING

PRIMARY

naturally reinforcing: food, water, warmth

SECONDARY

learned value: money, grades, praise

SHAPING

reinforce successive approximations

LIMIT Instinctive drift occurs when trained behavior shifts back toward an organism's natural behavior patterns.

2 Schedules and perceived control

Schedule names combine predictability with either responses or time.

CONTINUOUS VS PARTIAL

CONTINUOUS

reinforce every correct response

PARTIAL

reinforce only some responses

THE FOUR PARTIAL SCHEDULES

FIXED RATIO

predictable responses

Reward after every 10 sales.

VARIABLE RATIO

unpredictable responses

Slot-machine wins after changing numbers of plays.

FIXED INTERVAL

predictable time

Checking more as a scheduled test approaches; scalloped pattern.

VARIABLE INTERVAL

unpredictable time

Checking for messages that arrive at changing times.

RATIO = RESPONSES | INTERVAL = TIME | FIXED = PREDICTABLE | VARIABLE = UNPREDICTABLE

WHEN CONTROL IS MISREAD

SUPERSTITIOUS BEHAVIOR

Accidental reinforcement makes an unrelated action seem to cause an outcome.

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

Repeated uncontrollable outcomes teach that effort will not change what happens.

SCENARIO ROUTINE

Generalization spreads behavior to similar contexts; discrimination separates them. For schedules, ask responses or time, then predictable or unpredictable.