

REINFORCEMENT

Positive Reinforcement



Positive Reinforcement Definition

Something (item, activity, attention, sensory feeling, etc.) is **added** to an individual's environment **after a behavior** occurs that makes the same behavior **more likely** when encountering the same or similar contexts **in the future**.

Negative Reinforcement



Negative Reinforcement Definition

Something (item, activity, attention, sensory feeling) is **removed** from an individual's environment **after a behavior** occurs that makes the same behavior **more likely** when encountering the same or similar contexts **in the future**.



Example

Aretha is learning to use the word "please" when requesting food items. Her parents wait for Aretha to say, "May I please have an apple?". When Aretha asks, her parents immediately hand her an apple. Aretha begins using the word "please" whenever she requests an object.



Example

Raj is learning to ask for a break from chores instead of screaming. Raj's parents teach him to say, "I need a break" instead of screaming. After Raj says, "I need a break", his parents temporarily remove his chore requirement. Raj begins saying "I need a break" instead of screaming when told it's time for chores.



General Information

Both positive and negative reinforcement come after a behavior, and increase the likelihood of the same behavior occurring in similar contexts in the future. The shorter the time between the behavior and reinforcement and higher quality of the reinforcer, the more likely behavior will occur in a similar situation in the future. Different reinforcers may reinforce the same behavior for different people.

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