

4.6: Summary of Learning Objectives

4.1 Basic Models of Learning

1. How do organizations offer appropriate rewards in a timely fashion?

People learn through both direct experience and vicarious experience. What is retained and produced as behavior is a function of the positive and negative consequences either directly experienced by individuals or observed as the result of the actions of others. Often, managers and trainers underestimate the power of vicarious learning. Also, keep in mind that reinforcement that has some variability in its application (variable ratio or interval) has the strongest and longest-lasting impact on desired learned behaviors.

Learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior that occurs as a result of experience.

Thorndike's law of effect notes that behavior that is rewarded is likely to be repeated, whereas behavior that is punished is unlikely to be repeated. Operant conditioning can be distinguished from classical conditioning in two ways: (1) it asserts that changes in behavior result from the consequences of previous behaviors instead of changes in stimuli, and (2) it asserts that desired behaviors result only when rewards are tied to correct responses instead of when unconditioned stimuli are administered after every trial.

Social learning is the process of altering behavior through the reciprocal interaction of a person's cognitions, previous behavior, and environment. This is done through a process of reciprocal determinism.

Vicarious learning is learning that takes place through observation and imitation of others.

Learning is influenced by (1) a motivation to learn, (2) knowledge of results, (3) prior learning, (4) the extent to which the task to be learned is presented as a whole or in parts, and (5) distribution of practice.

4.2 Reinforcement and Behavioral Change

2. What are the best practices that organizations utilize to train employees in new job skills?

Reinforcement causes a certain behavior to be repeated or inhibited. Positive reinforcement is the practice of presenting someone with an attractive outcome following a desired behavior.

Avoidance learning occurs when someone attempts to avoid an unpleasant condition or outcome by behaving in a way desired by others.

Punishment is the administration of an unpleasant or adverse outcome following an undesired behavior. Reinforcement schedules may be continuous or partial. Among the partial reinforcement schedules are (1) fixed interval, (2) fixed ratio, (3) variable interval, and (4) variable ratio.

4.3 Behavior Modification in Organizations

3. How do managers and organizations reduce undesirable employee behavior while reinforcing desirable behavior?

Behavior modification is the use of operant principles to shape human behavior to conform to desired standards as defined by superiors. A behavior modification program follows five steps: (1) establish clear objectives, (2) conduct a performance audit, (3) set specific goals and remove obstacles, (4) evaluate results against preset criteria, and (5) administer feedback and praise where warranted.

4.4 Behavioral Self-Management

4. How can employees be trained to assume more responsibility for self-improvement and job performance with the goal of creating a work environment characterized by continual self-learning and employee development?

Behavioral self-management is the process of modifying one's own behavior by systematically managing cues, cognitions, and contingent consequences. BSM makes use of the self-regulation process.

This page titled [4.6: Summary of Learning Objectives](#) is shared under a [CC BY](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [OpenStax](#).