

Classical conditioning

General

Classical conditioning, sometimes also known as *Pavlov conditioning*, *respondent conditioning* or *Pavlovian reinforcement* is an [behaviorist](#) associate learning theory first introduced in 1927 by Russian physiologist [Ivan Pavlov](#).

What is classical conditioning?

Classical conditioning is based on the famous [Pavlov's dogs experiment](#). In this experiment, Pavlov, with means of reinforcement, thought his dogs to respond to the sound of the bell (*conditioned stimulus, CS*) by salivating (in this case both *conditioned* and *unconditioned response, CS, UCS*), which is the same way they would respond to food (*unconditioned stimulus, US*). A brief description of the experiment can be found [here](#).

The learning process here consists of associating an environmental stimulus to a naturally occurring stimulus. Successful **learning manifested in a natural reflex reaction on an associated environmental stimulus**. This defines the classical conditioning.

[The Little Albert experiment](#) is another famous experiment of classical conditioning performed by [John Watson](#), founder of behaviorism.

Basic behaviorist principles can also be recognized in this experiments: they **approach learning as to a visible change in behavior formed by external stimuli**, and even in case of performing an experiment on a human subject, they **ignore learners mind processes**.

What is the practical meaning of classical conditioning?

Even apart from classical conditioning techniques that help people or professionals train their pets, in reality there are many real-world applications for classical conditioning. These applications often include the **treatment of phobias or anxiety problems in educational process**.

Teachers are able to apply classical conditioning in the class by creating a positive classroom environment to **help students overcome anxiety or fear**. **Pairing an anxiety-provoking situation**, such as performing in front of a group, **with pleasant surroundings** helps the student learn new associations. Instead of feeling anxious and tense in these situations, the student will learn to stay relaxed and calm.

Keywords and most important names

- Classical conditioning, Pavlov conditioning, respondent conditioning, Pavlovian reinforcement, Pavlov's dogs, little Albert, conditioned stimulus, conditioned response, unconditioned stimulus,

unconditioned response

- Ivan Pavlov, John Watson

Bibliography

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Read more

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Last update: **2023/06/19 15:49**

