

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, taught 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 (conditioned) stimulus to a naturally occurring (unconditioned) stimulus. During the learning process it is important that unconditioned stimulus precedes conditioned stimulus and successful **learning manifested in a natural reflex reaction on an associated environmental stimulus**. This defines the classical conditioning.

Other important parameters of classical conditioning are **latency** (length of time between unconditioned and conditioned stimulus), **extinction** (decreasing of probability of learned behavior after unconditioned and conditioned stimulus appeared impaired for a number of times) and **spontaneous recovery** (spontaneous re-occurrence of learned behavior after extinction).

Taste aversion and [the Little Albert experiment](#) performed by [John Watson](#), founder of behaviorism are some more examples of classical conditioning.

Basic behaviorist principles can also be recognized in these 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

["Classical Conditioning - Introduction to Classical Conditioning."](#)

["Classical Conditioning \(Pavlov\) at Learning Theories."](#)

Read more

[Pavlov, Ivan. P. Conditioned reflexes: An investigation of the physiological activity of the cerebral cortex. 1927.](#)

[Lavond, David G., and Joseph E. Steinmetz. Handbook of classical conditioning. Springer, 2003.](#)

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