

Behaviorism

About behaviorism

Some of the oldest learning theories belong to the behaviorism as [learning paradigm](#) and date back from the beginning of the 20th century. The key component to this paradigm are **stimulus-response** (S-R) events resulting in **observable behaviors** which can be **measured**.

Behaviorists view **learning as a visible change in ones behavior**. Behaviorism assumes that the learner starts off as a clear state and simply responds to environmental stimuli. Those responses **can be shaped through positive and negative reinforcement** increasing or decreasing the probability of repeating the same behavior.

This learning paradigm can roughly be divided in two phases: **behaviorism (1910-1930)** and **neobehaviorism (1930-1955)**. Neobehaviorism outgrew classical behaviorism by attempts to formalize the laws of behavior (sometimes in forms of mathematical equations) and beliefs that learning can also occur indirectly through observing. Neobehaviorists are sometimes considered a transitional group that shifted dominant learning perspective toward [cognitivism](#).

Behaviorist learning theories:

Among below listed learning theories within behaviorist framework, connectionism presents an introduction to behaviorist learning and setting its frames followed by true behaviorist learning perspectives of classical and operant conditioning.

Sign learning appeared as first neobehaviorist theory, followed by drive reduction theory, which also incorporated idea of describing learning with intervening variables. Drive reduction learning influenced discrimination theory. Neobehaviorist started the transition to cognitivism and finally rejection of behaviorism as dominant learning paradigm.

- [Connectionism](#) - Edward Thorndike (1874 - 1949)
- [Clasical Conditioning](#) - Ivan Pavlov (1849 - 1936)
- [Contiguity Theory](#) (Edwin Guthrie (1886 - 1959)
- [Operant Conditioning](#) - Burrhus Skinner (1904 - 1990)
- [Stimulus Sampling Theory](#) William Estes (1919 -)
- [Sign Learning](#) - Edward Tolman (1886 - 1959)
- [Drive Reduction Theory](#) - Clark Hull (1884 - 1952)
- [Discriminational Learning](#) Keneth Spence (1907 - 1967)

Criticisms

Behaviorism today mostly **lost its influence** and let **cognitivism take its place** as the dominant paradigm. Critics of behaviorist learning usually argue that behaviorism:

- **does not explain all kinds o learning** since it ignores inner mind activities,

- offers a very limited view on learning since it **ignores internal factors** such as emotions or motivation,
- ignores fact that learning depends on learner's **inner** subjective **representation of environment and learning history**.

Bibliography

[Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy: Behaviorism.](#)

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

Read more

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Skinner, B. F. About Behaviorism. Paw Prints, 2008.

Baum, William M. Understanding behaviorism: science, behavior, and culture. Wiley-Blackwell, 1994.

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