

Behaviorism

About behaviorism

Although its roots can be tracked way back, first learning theories belong to the behaviorism as [learning paradigm](#) date from the 1910s. The key component to this paradigm are **stimulus-response** (S-R) associations resulting in **observable behaviors** which can be **measured**.



Behaviorists view the mind as a “black box” and do not attempt to analyze its thought processes. They approach learning as a visible change in one's behavior which, unlike mind processes, can be measured. 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** (usually in form of a reward or a punishment) 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. Neobehaviorist started the transition to cognitivism and finally rejection of behaviorism as dominant learning paradigm.

- [Connectionism - Edward Thorndike \(1874 - 1949\)](#)
- [Classical Conditioning - Ivan Pavlov \(1849 - 1936\)](#)
- [Contiguity Theory and One Trial Learning Edwin Guthrie \(1886 - 1959\)](#)
- [Sign Learning - Edward Tolman \(1886 - 1959\)](#)
- [Drive Reduction Theory - Clark Hull \(1884 - 1952\)](#)
- [Operant Conditioning - Burrhus Skinner \(1904 - 1990\)](#)
- [Stimulus Sampling Theory William Estes \(1919 - \)](#)

Basic ideas and approximate historical introduction time for each of these theories can be found in this [chronological overview](#).

Criticisms

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

- **does not explain all kinds of 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

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