





# Psychology Module – Week 4: Learning and Conditioning

## Objectives:

By the end of this week, students should be able to:

-  Define learning and understand its significance in behavior.
-  Describe the main types of learning: classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning.
-  Apply learning theories to real-life situations.
-  Analyze behavior using conditioning principles.

## Lesson 1: Understanding Learning

### Definition:

Learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior or knowledge resulting from experience. It is a fundamental process that allows humans and animals to adapt to their environment.

### Key Points:

Learning is active; it involves practice, observation, and experience.

Learning can influence both behavioral habits and mental processes.

Understanding learning helps in education, therapy, parenting, and personal growth.

### Example:

Learning to ride a bike through repeated practice.

Learning study techniques that improve exam performance.

### Activity:

Reflect on a skill you learned recently. Write down:

1. How have you learned it.
2. Which type of learning does it represent.
3. Challenges you faced.

## **Lesson 2: Classical Conditioning (Pavlov)**

Definition:

Classical conditioning is a type of learning in which an organism learns to associate a neutral stimulus with a meaningful stimulus, producing a conditioned response.

### **Key Concepts:**

Unconditioned Stimulus (UCS): Naturally triggers a response (e.g., food).

Unconditioned Response (UCR): Natural response to UCS (e.g., salivation).

Conditioned Stimulus (CS): Previously neutral stimulus that triggers a learned response (e.g., bell).

Conditioned Response (CR): Learned response to CS (e.g., salivating to bell).

Example:

Pavlov's dogs salivated when they heard a bell paired with food.

### **Activity:**

Think of a time you developed a habit or reaction due to repeated pairing.

Example: Feeling hungry when hearing the lunch bell.

Identify the UCS, UCR, CS, and CR in your example.

## **Lesson 3: Operant Conditioning (Skinner)**

Definition:

Operant conditioning is learning through consequences, where behavior is shaped by rewards or punishments.

**Key Concepts:**

Reinforcement: Increases the likelihood of behavior.

Positive: Adding a reward (e.g., praise for completing homework).

Negative: Removing an unpleasant stimulus (e.g., stopping nagging when chores are done).

Punishment: Decreases the likelihood of behavior.

Positive: Adding an unpleasant stimulus (e.g., scolding for misbehavior).

Negative: Removing a pleasant stimulus (e.g., taking away phone privileges).

**Example:**

A student studies regularly to get good grades (positive reinforcement).

A teenager loses phone privileges for breaking rules (negative punishment).

Activity:

Create a table listing one habit you want to change. Identify:

Reinforcements to encourage positive behavior.

Punishments to discourage negative behavior.

**Lesson 4: Observational Learning (Bandura)**

Definition:

Observational learning is learning by watching and imitating others. It highlights the influence of models (people we observe).

**Key Concepts:**

Learning can occur without direct reinforcement.

Attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation are required to learn effectively.

Example:

A child learns to tie shoes by watching a parent.

Teenagers adopt social behaviors observed on peers or media.

Activity:

Watch a short video or observe someone performing a skill. Try to imitate the skill step by step. Reflect on what you learned.

## **Lesson 5: Real-Life Applications in Learning and Conditioning**

Education:

Teachers use reinforcement to encourage participation and good behavior.

Study techniques rely on conditioning and cognitive strategies.

Behavior Modification:

Therapists use operant and classical conditioning to treat phobias, addictions, or anxiety.

Parenting:

Parents use praise, rewards, or consequences to guide children's behavior.

**Activity:**

Behavior Analysis Project:

1. Choose behavior in yourself or someone else.
2. Analyze it using classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning.
3. Suggest a plan to improve or change the behavior using learning principles.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Can you identify a behavior in your daily life influenced by reinforcement or punishment?
2. How can observing others help you learn new skills faster than trial and error?
3. Which type of learning do you find most effective for yourself and why?

## **Summary**

Learning is a permanent change in behavior or knowledge due to experience.

Three main types of learning:

1. Classical Conditioning – Learning by association.
2. Operant Conditioning – Learning through consequences (reinforcement and punishment).
3. Observational Learning – Learning by observing others.

Understanding learning and conditioning helps in education, therapy, personal development, and behavior modification.