
TIME FOR KIDS
WILD WORK!
ANIMAL TRAINERS
Jessica Cohn

For teachers' inspection ONLY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Amazing Feats 4
The Elephant in the Room 15
Big Cats 27
It's a Bear 37
In the Water 47
Risks and Rewards 55
Glossary 58
Index 60
Bibliography 62
More to Explore 63
About the Author 64

AMAZING FEATS

Animal trainers train animals to perform. They also teach animals such as **guide dogs** how to help people. Getting animals to respond to people is always at the heart of their work. Animal trainers take care of animals and understand **animal psychology**. They form close bonds with the animals they train. But the best trainers never forget that the animals they work with are wild creatures. They are always aware of the dangers of their job.



An elephant follows a trainer's directions to paint.

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THINK LINK

- Why would someone want to become an animal trainer?
- What techniques do trainers use to influence an animal's behavior?
- How does someone prepare to become an animal trainer?

Creatures of Habit

Animals learn in two different ways. To understand the first way, think about a man that often orders pizza. When the doorbell rings, the man's dog starts drooling. Why? The dog has come to associate the bell with pizza. Drooling when the doorbell rings is a **response** beyond its control. This is an example of **classical conditioning**.

The man pays the delivery person and begins eating a slice of pizza. His dog jumps up and puts its paws on the table, whining and begging. The man tells it to sit. The dog sits quietly and earns a bite of crust. This is an outcome of **operant conditioning**. It is behavior the dog can learn and control.



To the Dogs

Ivan Pavlov was a famous researcher. He gave his dogs food and measured how much drool they made. Next, he began ringing a bell before feeding them. Eventually, the dogs drooled when hearing the bell, food or no food.

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Favorite Treats

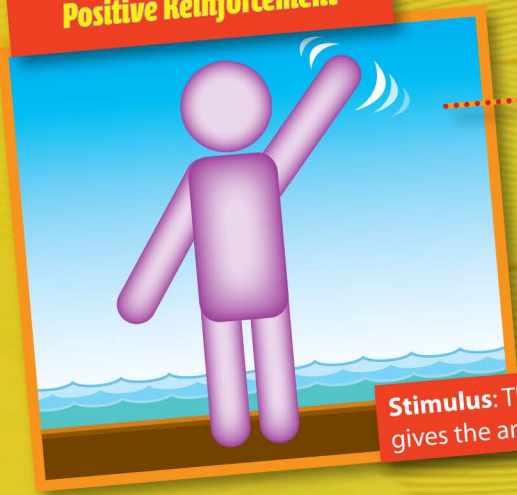
Different animals like different rewards. Here are a few to try with your pets.

- back scratches
- ice cubes
- games
- food
- playtime
- brushing

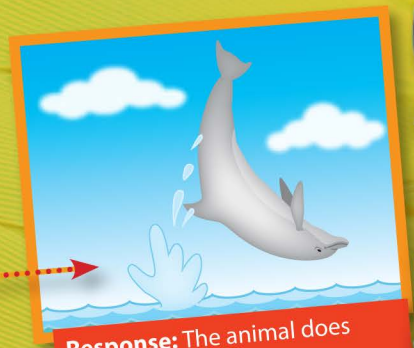
Think Like a Trainer

Training any animal follows a pattern of stimulus, response, and **reinforcement**. The stimulus is a word or signal. The response is the desired behavior. The reinforcement is when the trainer lets the animal know that he or she recognizes the behavior. Trainers also use reinforcement to stop bad behaviors. They create a link between a behavior and a reward or a punishment.

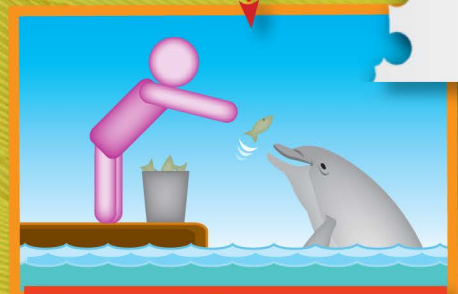
Positive Reinforcement



Stimulus: The trainer gives the animal a signal.



Response: The animal does something good.



Reinforcement: The trainer starts a fun activity or gives the animal a treat.

Negative Reinforcement



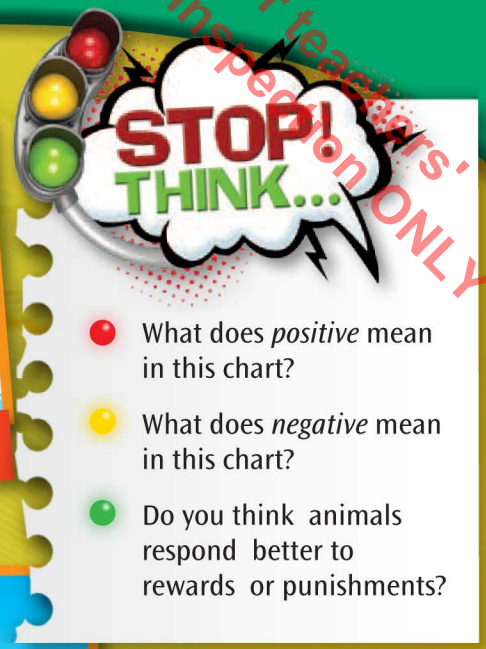
Behavior: The animal does something bad.



Response: The animal stops the bad behavior.



Reinforcement: The trainer takes away something good or stops doing something fun.



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