

NAME _____

PERIOD _____

OPERANT (INSTRUMENTAL) CONDITIONING EXAMPLES

DIRECTIONS.

The following scenarios describe some behaviors and their consequences. Use the principles of operant conditioning to predict whether the targeted behavior (the underlined one) will recur. Then identify whether the consequence for the person performing the behavior was good (mark a "+", bad (mark a "-"), or none (mark a "0"). Then specify whether the targeted behavior is likely to increase (mark a "↑") or to decrease (mark a "↓").

Hints:

Positive reinforcement: When a behavior is followed by a favorable outcome (+), the behavior is likely to be strengthened in the future (↑).

Negative reinforcement: When a person is trapped in a bad situation, he or she performs a behavior to escape the bad situation. The escape is a favorable outcome (+); the escape behavior is likely to be strengthened in the future (↑).

Punishment: When a behavior is followed by an unpleasant outcome (-), the behavior *may* decrease in the future (↓).

Extinction: When a behavior has no meaningful consequence (0), the behavior will decrease in the future (↓).

Scenario	Nature of Consequence	Likelihood of Recurrence	Principle
1. A student <u>volunteers</u> to answer a tough question in class and the teacher comments favorably on the quality of the student's answer.			
2. A child is sent to his room with no supper after <u>presenting</u> a bad report card.			
3. Dad and child enter the checkout lane of the supermarket. When the child <u>screams</u> for candy, Dad gives her a sucker to quiet her down. (answer from the <u>child's</u> perspective)			
4. The situation above, answered from the father's perspective.			

Scenario	Nature of Consequence	Likelihood of Recurrence	Principle
5. Two children, who usually spend most of their time fighting, finally <u>play peaceably</u> over a coloring book. Dad peeks in and sighs, "at last, they are getting along." He returns to work without saying anything to the children.			
6. A wife brings home flowers to her husband because of the special dinner he had <u>cooked</u> to surprise her.			
7. A child <u>spills</u> milk all over the supper table, and Mom (having had a very bad day), swoops the child up from the high chair and spanks him.			
8. A student has a terrible headache after an intense preparation period for a test. He <u>takes two aspirin</u> to make it go away. He feels much better now.			
9. A terrorist applies an electrical current to the feet of a spy so that she will <u>confess</u> . She tells him everything. (answer from the victim's point of view)			
10. A spoiled child is being driven by a fast-food restaurant when she begins screaming that she must have french fries or she won't survive. The parents <u>surrender</u> and drive in for a large supply of fries. (answer from the <u>parent's</u> perspective)			
11. A teenager <u>whines</u> about having nothing to do. Dad gives him a lecture about all the stuff in his room and the good old days when he didn't have all that stuff but still managed to be happy. The teenager stops complaining. (answer from the teenager's perspective)			
12. The situation above answered from the father's perspective.			
13. The situation above if the father had ignored the whining of the teenager.			