

## **Positive and Negative Punishment**

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## Positive and Negative Punishment

Punishment is a form of conditioning meant to instigate a behavior modification. With this in mind, punishment may be categorized as positive or negative, depending on the activities involved. Positive punishment occurs when a specific behavior results in or entails an unpleasant stimulus. According to (Cooper et al. 2020), the stimulus has to occur immediately following the behavior to reduce the frequency of the behavior. The unpleasant stimulus used to punish bad behavior can be performing an action, returning an object, or conveying an emotion. Examples of positive punishment include corporal punishment, threats, and insults. On the other hand, negative punishment occurs when a pleasant stimulus is removed immediately after bad behavior. Examples of negative punishment include taking away a favorite toy, forbidding play, or leaving the house.

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Positive and negative punishment have numerous similarities and differences. The first similarity is that both are types of punishment, a concept of operant conditioning. The second similarity is that both have the objective of decreasing any undesired behavior. However, to be effective, they have to immediately follow the behavior and be applied consistently. The third similarity is in their effectiveness. Even though punishment is effective, it does not always work. Both types of punishment sometimes fail, evident from the case of criminals. The differences between positive and negative punishment are that the former aims to add a stimulus while the latter removes a stimulus. Secondly, in positive punishment, the stimuli have a pleasant consequence, while in negative punishment, stimuli have an unpleasant consequence (Cooper et al., 2020). Lastly, positive punishment strengthens and maintains responses, while negative punishment avoids and escapes responses.

Due to technological advancement, almost everybody has a smartphone. The first example of positive punishment is when a student receives a phone call interrupting the lecturer in class. The teacher then scolds the student in front of the whole class. The lecturer further adds sending the student out of his class. In this example, the antecedent is that phones should not be used during class sessions. The behavior is answering the phone call while in class. The consequence is scolding and being ordered to write an apology letter. In this same scenario, a different lecturer can use negative punishment. Once the learner answers the call and disrupts the class, the instructor may confiscate the phone. Therefore for the negative punishment, the antecedent is also that phones should not be used during class sessions. The behavior is picking up the phone call while in class. The consequence will be the teacher confiscating the learner's phone for a whole week.

Another example of the real-world application of positive punishment is a parent and a child who are in a supermarket and are going to pay for the goods they buy. The child steals a doll from the supermarket, the parent demands the child write an apology letter and pay for the doll. In this example, the antecedent is that a parent and a child are in a supermarket and are going to pay for the goods they buy, while the behavior is the child stealing from the supermarket and the consequence is making the child pay for the toy and write an apology letter. The objective here is to make sure that the child remembers the punishment, so they do not do it again. The second example of negative punishment is when an adolescent has a curfew of 9:30 P.M. The teenager misses the curfew by 30 minutes. The parents take away the PS4 in his room for one week to punish him. The antecedent in this scenario is having a curfew of 9:30 P.M, while the behavior is missing the curfew and the consequence is taking away the PS4 from his room.

## Reference

Cooper, J., Heron, T., & Heward, W. (2020). *Applied behavior analysis* (3rd ed.). Pearson.






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