How Learning Happens

Three learning processes in a school café

P.4.1 "Explain the process of learning, including principles of operant, classical, and observational."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the cue, action, or person being watched in each café example, and circle the response or consequence that helps explain how learning occurs.

A Busy Day at the Café

1. At a school café, students can learn without anyone giving a lesson. One route is classical conditioning: a cue that first means little becomes linked with an automatic response after it appears repeatedly before something that naturally causes that response. Fresh cinnamon rolls make Maya's mouth water. Each morning, a small bell rings just before the rolls come out of the oven. After several mornings, Maya's mouth waters when she hears the bell, even before she smells the rolls. The bell does not create the taste of cinnamon. Her body has learned to expect food because the two events kept occurring together.

2. Another route is operant conditioning: the results of an action change how likely someone is to do it again. During the café's busy lunch period, Leo tries placing napkins beside the checkout counter instead of behind it. Customers reach them easily, and the manager thanks him right away. Leo puts the napkins there again the next day. If an action led to an unpleasant result instead, a person might do it less often. In this kind of learning, what happens after a behavior matters, rather than what happened just before it.

3. A third route is observational learning: people may acquire a behavior by watching someone else perform it, even before trying it themselves. At the same café, Amira watches an experienced volunteer turn a handwritten menu toward the line, where people can read it. Amira has never set up the menu before. When she takes the next shift, she turns it the same way without being told or rewarded. Watching supplies a model for what to do; later practice can improve the new behavior. Seeing where customers stand helps Amira understand why the volunteer positioned the menu that way.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the bell make Maya's mouth water even before she smells the rolls? Explain how she learned this response.

2. Why is Leo likely to put the napkins beside the counter again? Explain how the result of his action affects his behavior.

3. How does Amira learn where to turn the menu without being told or rewarded?

4. Compare when the important event occurs in Maya's learning and Leo's learning: before or after the response or action? Explain why that difference matters.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Create a new school or home situation that shows all three learning processes. In three to five sentences, show a cue linked to an automatic response, a consequence that changes a chosen behavior, and a behavior learned by watching someone else.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the cue, action, or person being watched in each café example, and circle the response or consequence that helps explain how learning occurs. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the bell make Maya's mouth water even before she smells the rolls? Explain how she learned this response.	**The bell repeatedly rang before the rolls appeared. Maya learned to associate the bell with food, so the bell alone triggers an automatic response.**
2	Why is Leo likely to put the napkins beside the counter again? Explain how the result of his action affects his behavior.	**The manager thanked Leo right after he moved the napkins. That positive consequence makes him more likely to repeat the action.**
3	How does Amira learn where to turn the menu without being told or rewarded?	**She watches the experienced volunteer turn the menu toward the line, then copies that action on her next shift.**
4	Compare when the important event occurs in Maya's learning and Leo's learning: before or after the response or action? Explain why that difference matters.	**The bell comes before the rolls and becomes a cue for Maya's automatic response. The manager's thanks comes after Leo places the napkins and makes him more likely to repeat that choice.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After I smell sunscreen just before several fun swims, the scent alone makes me feel excited. My sister begins putting away her dishes more often after our parents praise her for doing it. I watch my aunt fold a fitted sheet, then copy her steps on my own sheet. The scent has become a cue, the praise encourages a repeated choice, and watching gives me a model.

Accept different wording if students correctly distinguish an automatic response to a learned cue, a behavior changed by its consequence, and a behavior acquired by watching a model.