



The Importance of Positive Reinforcement in the Classroom

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Abstract

Positive reinforcement techniques, when done well and with the right balance, can be transformational for student behaviours and outcomes. The purpose of this article was to establish how reinforcement can be used more systematically in the classroom. In terms of data collection, the author sourced and reviewed literature on the topic. Among others, these sources included journal articles, books, magazines and newspapers. Keep in mind there is a difference between positive reinforcement and bribing. Bribing can lead to additional behavior struggles in the classroom. Positive reinforcement is earned, bribing is not. Reinforcers should be presented to the student immediately upon the demonstration of positive behavior, such as following classroom expectations. Bribing is typically presented to coax a student into engaging in a specific behaviour. The reinforcer is the stimulus you are presenting. Generally speaking, a reinforcer is typically an item or activity that the student enjoys. The study established that reinforcement increases the frequency of a behaviour while punishment decreases the frequency of a behavior. Once again, punishment decreases the occurrence of a behavior, but what you see as punishment may actually be reinforcement. The study therefore concludes that, it is critical that you never assume to know what is reinforcing your student's behaviors.

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