Definitions and Concepts for AQA Psychology AS-level

Topic 4: Approaches in Psychology

Attention: The extent to which an individual focuses on and notices a behaviour being demonstrated by a role model.

Behaviourist approach: An approach that suggests behaviour is learned through interactions with the environment.

Biological approach: An approach that explains behaviour in terms of biological factors such as genetics, brain structure and physiology.

Classical conditioning: A form of learning through association, in which a new stimulus becomes associated with a stimulus that naturally produces a response.

Cognitive approach: An approach that focuses on internal mental processes, such as thinking, memory, attention and perception, and uses models to explain how they work.

Cognitive neuroscience: The scientific field concerned with the study of biological structures and brain mechanisms that underpin cognitive processes.

Evolution: The process by which inherited characteristics that increase an organism's chances of survival and reproduction become more common across generations.

Extinction: The gradual disappearance of a conditioned response when the conditioned stimulus is repeatedly presented without the unconditioned stimulus.

Genotype: An individual's genetic makeup.

Generalisation: The tendency for a conditioned response to occur in response to stimuli that are similar to the conditioned stimulus.

Identification: A process in social learning theory in which an individual is more likely to imitate a role model they perceive as being similar to themselves or someone they want to be like.

Imitation: The process of copying the behaviour of a role model.

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Mediational processes: Internal mental processes that occur between observing a behaviour and deciding whether to imitate it.

Modelling: The process in which a role model demonstrates a behaviour that can be observed and potentially imitated by another person.

Motor reproduction: The ability of an individual to physically reproduce a behaviour they have observed.

Motivation: The degree to which an individual wants or expects to benefit from performing a behaviour, affecting whether they are likely to imitate it.

Negative reinforcement: A consequence that increases the likelihood of a behaviour being repeated because it removes or avoids an unpleasant stimulus.

Operant conditioning: A form of learning in which behaviour is shaped by its consequences, with reinforcement increasing the likelihood of behaviour being repeated.

Phenotype: An individual's observable characteristics, resulting from the interaction between their genotype and environmental factors.

Positive reinforcement: A consequence that increases the likelihood of a behaviour being repeated by providing a desirable stimulus.

Punishment: An unpleasant consequence following a behaviour that decreases the likelihood of that behaviour being repeated.

Retention: The process of storing an observed behaviour in memory so that it can be recalled later.

Schema: A cognitive framework of information gained from experiences that helps a person interpret the world and build and organise their knowledge and understanding.

Social learning theory: An approach suggesting that behaviour can be learned through observing and imitating others, with cognitive processes influencing whether observed behaviour is reproduced.

Spontaneous recovery: The reappearance of an extinguished conditioned response after a period of rest.

Theoretical models: Simplified representations used to explain and understand complex psychological processes or behaviour.

Vicarious reinforcement: An increase in the likelihood of a behaviour being imitated after observing another person being rewarded for performing that behaviour.