Operant Conditioning Examples
For each example below, decide whether the situation describes positive reinforcement (PR), negative reinforcement (NR), positive punishment (PP), or negative punishment (NP). Note: the examples are randomly ordered, and there are not equal numbers of each form of operant conditioning.

Question Set #1
___ 1. Johnny puts his quarter in the vending machine and gets a piece of candy.
___ 2. I put on sunscreen to avoid a sunburn.
___ 3. You stick your hand in a flame and you get a painful burn.
___ 4. Bobby fights with his sister and does not get to watch TV that night.
___ 5. A child misbehaves and gets a spanking.
___ 6. You come to work late regularly and you get demoted.
___ 7. You take an aspirin to eliminate a headache.
___ 8. You walk the dog to avoid having dog poop in the house.
___ 9. Nathan tells a good joke and his friends all laugh.
___ 10. You climb on a railing of a balcony and fall.
___ 11. Julie stays out past her curfew and now does not get to use the car for a week.
___ 12. Robert goes to work every day and gets a paycheck.
___ 13. Sue wears a bike helmet to avoid a head injury.
___ 14. Tim thinks he is sneaky and tries to text in class. He is caught and given a long, boring book to read.
___ 15. Emma smokes in school and gets hall privileges taken away.
___ 16. Sawa falls asleep under the sun, and gets a sunburn.
___ 17. A rat presses a lever and gets a shock.
___ 18. Joe puts on deodorant to avoid having body odor.
___ 19. Marco studies a lot and gets a good grade.
___ 20. The squirrel runs up a tree to escape a predator.

Question Set #2
___ 1. Wearing sunglasses to avoid/remove the glare of the sun.
___ 2. Receiving a warning from the police for speeding in your car.
___ 3. You get sick from drinking too much vodka so you moderate your drinking in the future.
___ 5. You receive an award for writing short stories.
___ 6. Enjoying giving a party where everyone seems to be having a great time.
___ 7. I got grounded because I came home past curfew.
___ 8. Eating an entire batch of chocolate cookies in one sitting and feeling sick to my stomach.
___ 9. Hurting your head when you don’t duck in a low doorway.
___ 10. Alix gets her allowance after she completes her weekly chores.
___ 11. Yusuf ducks his head to avoid hitting it on a low doorway.
___ 12. You receive a kiss for bringing your girlfriend or boyfriend flowers.
___ 13. You refuse to be affectionate toward your partner when they forget your anniversary.
___ 14. You receive a raise at work for doing your job well.
Your sister whacks you upside the head for getting in her personal space.

Losing your driver's license after getting too many demerits.

A repo man takes a car for your failure to make loan payments.

Rafael puts on his seatbelt to stop the annoying “dinging” noise in his car.

You come in late after curfew and your parents take away your car keys.

Snapping your wrist with a rubber band when you bite your fingernails.

A teenager loses his cellphone for talking back to his mom.

The teacher takes a student’s cell phone away in class.

Emilie stretches to avoid a sports injury.

Giving your child dessert because he ate his vegetables.

Getting pleasure from a stimulating conversation with a colleague.

A service dog is allowed to play tug as a reward for correctly identifying the location of hidden drugs.

You take an analgesic pill and your headache goes away.

Studying for an exam reduces stress.

Chewing nicotine gum makes the craving for a cigarette go away.

Eating a meal you don’t like in order to avoid hurting the cook’s feelings.

Feeling good after working at a soup kitchen.

You decide to tell an interrogator everything he wants to know to get him to stop torturing you.

You clean up your room so your mom will stop nagging you about it.

A parent punishes a child to stop his misbehaviour; this works, so the parent increasingly uses the punishment.

Tashina’s cell phone rings in class; the teacher answers the phone and talks to the caller, making Tashina feel embarrassed.

Telling my friends how to play a game who then tell me to mind my own business!

Taking out the garbage to quiet a nagging significant other.

Your dog jumps on you when you return home, so you turn your back on your dog and ignore him.

You’re trying to study, but there’s annoying noise from the traffic outside coming through an open window; you decide to close the window to reduce the sound of the traffic.
15. Asad gets a cookie after finishing a reading assignment.
16. I walk into a pole while texting.
17. You put up an umbrella to avoiding getting wet in the rain.
18. If I yell “You're the king of the world!” my brother will let me up off the floor.
19. Zachary is very naughty one afternoon, so his mom tells him he cannot go on a camping trip with his best friend that weekend.
20. After a child slams a door in anger, the parent removes the bedroom door from its hinges, removing privacy.
21. Martha breaks the law and goes to jail, where she is forced to live in a small, smelly room.
22. Wearing a helmet, pads, etc. to avoid getting injured when playing hockey.
23. Chewing nicotine gum brings a dopamine release in the brain, which feels good.
Answers to Set #1
1. positive reinforcement
2. negative reinforcement
3. positive punishment
4. negative punishment
5. positive punishment
6. negative punishment
7. negative reinforcement
8. negative reinforcement
9. positive reinforcement
10. positive punishment
11. negative punishment
12. positive reinforcement
13. negative reinforcement
14. positive punishment
15. negative punishment
16. positive punishment
17. positive punishment
18. negative reinforcement
19. positive reinforcement
20. negative reinforcement

Answers to Set #2
1. negative reinforcement
2. positive punishment
3. positive punishment
4. positive reinforcement
5. positive reinforcement
6. positive reinforcement
7. negative punishment
8. positive punishment
9. positive punishment
10. positive reinforcement
11. negative reinforcement
12. positive reinforcement
13. negative punishment
14. positive reinforcement
15. negative punishment
16. positive punishment
17. negative punishment
18. negative reinforcement
19. negative punishment
20. positive punishment

Answers to Set #3
1. negative punishment
2. negative punishment
3. negative reinforcement
4. positive reinforcement
5. positive reinforcement
6. positive reinforcement
7. negative reinforcement
8. negative reinforcement
9. negative reinforcement
10. negative reinforcement
11. positive reinforcement
12. negative reinforcement
13. positive punishment
14. negative reinforcement
15. negative reinforcement
16. positive punishment
17. positive punishment
18. negative reinforcement
19. negative punishment
20. negative reinforcement

**Answers to Set #4**
1. positive reinforcement
2. negative punishment
3. negative punishment
4. positive punishment
5. positive punishment
6. positive punishment
7. positive reinforcement
8. positive reinforcement
9. positive reinforcement
10. negative reinforcement
11. positive reinforcement
12. negative reinforcement
13. positive punishment
14. negative punishment
15. positive reinforcement
16. positive punishment
17. negative reinforcement
18. negative reinforcement
19. negative punishment
20. negative punishment
21. positive punishment
22. negative reinforcement
23. positive reinforcement

**References**