

# [Behaviourism essay sample](https://assignbuster.com/behaviourism-essay-sample/)

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Behaviourism (also called the behavioural approach) was the primary paradigm in psychology between 1920s to 1950 and is based on a number of underlying assumptions regarding methodology and behavioural analysis:

\* Psychology should be seen as a science. Theories need to be supported by empirical data obtained through careful and controlled observation and measurement of behaviour. Watson stated that “ psychology as a behaviourist views it is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is … prediction and control” (1913, p. 158).

\* Behaviourism is primarily concerned with observable behaviour, as opposed to internal events like thinking and emotion. Observable (i. e. external) behaviour can be objectively and scientifically measured. Internal events, such as thinking should be explained through behavioural terms (or eliminated altogether).

\* People have no free will – a person’s environment determines their behavior

\* When born our mind is ‘ tabula rasa’ (a blank slate).

\* There is little difference between the learning that takes place in humans and that in other animals. Therefore research can be carried out on animals as well as humans.

\* Behaviour is the result of stimulus – response (i. e. all behaviour, no matter how complex, can be reduced to a simple stimulus – response association). Watson described the purpose of psychology as: “ To predict, given the stimulus, what reaction will take place; or, given the reaction, state what the situation or stimulus is that has caused the reaction” (1930, p. 11).

\* All behaviour is learnt from the environment. We learn new behaviour through classical or operant conditioning.

The History of Behaviourism

\* Pavlov (1897) published the results of an experiment on conditioning after originally studying digestion in dogs.

\* Watson (1913) launches the behavioural school of psychology (classical conditioning), publishing an article, “ Psychology as the Behaviourist Views It”.

\* Watson and Rayner (1920) conditioned an orphan called Albert B (aka Little Albert) to fear a white rat.

\* Thorndike (1905) formalized the “ Law of Effect”.

\* Skinner (1936) wrote “ The Behaviour of Organisms” and introduced the concepts of operant conditioning and shaping.

\* Clark Hull’s (1943) Principles of Behaviour was published.

\* B. F. Skinner (1948) published Walden Two in which he described a utopian society founded upon behaviourist principles.

\* Bandura (1963) publishes a book called the “ Social Leaning Theory and Personality development” which combines both cognitive and behavioural frameworks.

\* Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behaviour (begun in 1958)

\* B. F. Skinner (1971) published his book Beyond Freedom and Dignity, where he argues that free will is an illusion.