

The Shaping Skills Workshop

Reinforcement Systems 101 (OCT 2024)

In this virtual workshop, you will learn core concepts and refine your teaching skills.

This workshop is divided into four classes:

- Reinforcement Systems 101
- Building Blocks for Accelerated Shaping
- Creating Shaping Plans
- Designing Reinforcement Systems

This syllabus is for Reinforcement Systems 101, starting in [October 2024](#).

In this class, you will learn about reinforcers and reinforcement systems. You'll practice reinforcer delivery and timing using a shaping game called PORTL. You'll also design, build, and tweak a reinforcement system for an animal learner.

Instructor information: Mary Hunter, Sarah Owen, & Hannah McGee
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Class start date: This class will start on [Tuesday, October 1, 2024](#).

Class platform: Access at: <https://learn.behaviorexplorer.com/>

Assignment submissions: The last day to submit assignments, videos, and questions if you would like to receive feedback will be [November 23, 2024](#).

Class platform access: You will have access until [February 28, 2025](#).

Assignment review: During the week (Monday–Friday), feedback on assignments and answers to questions will be provided within 48 hours.

Discussion hour: [Tuesdays from 1:30–2:30 p.m. Central Time](#)
and [Tuesdays from 8:00–9:00 p.m. Central Time](#)

These optional Zoom sessions will be held two times per week to accommodate participants in different times zones. The first discussion hour will be held on [October 1](#) and the sixth (and last) sessions will be held on [November 5](#).

Note: These sessions will not be recorded.

How to work through the lessons: You will work through the lessons in order and at your own pace. However, if you have limited access to a PORTL partner or an animal learner, please talk with us so that we can help you make a plan.

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Workshop outline

In this class, you will learn about reinforcers and reinforcement systems. You'll practice reinforcer delivery and timing using a shaping game called PORTL. You'll also design, build, and tweak a reinforcement system for an animal learner.

Time commitment: Participants often ask, “How much time should I plan to spend on this class?” Each week, two new lessons will be posted on the class platform. Each lesson will take approximately one hour of time for you to complete. You can also attend a hour-long class discussion session each week.

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| Week 1 | Lesson 1 | What is a Reinforcement System? |
| | Lesson 2 | Check Your Reinforcer, Container & Location |
| Week 2 | Lesson 3 | PORTL Reinforcer Delivery and Timing |
| | Lesson 4 | Reinforcement System Components |
| Week 3 | Catch-up week: No new lessons | |
| Week 4 | Lesson 5 | Practice Reinforcement Delivery |
| | Lesson 6 | The PORTL Reinforcement System |
| Week 5 | Lesson 7 | Add a Reinforcement Signal |
| | Lesson 8 | Use Your Reinforcement System |
| Week 6 | Wrap-up week: No new lessons | |

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| Types of activities | Core concepts | Short videos and assignments will teach you how to create optimal learning situations when working with both animals and people. |
| | PORTL practice | PORTL exercises will allow you to practice core concepts and improve your shaping skills with another person as your learner. |
| | Teaching tasks | These activities will allow you to practice teaching behaviors to animal and human learners with guidance from your instructors. |

You will work through the lessons at your own pace. However, to stay on track, you should aim to complete two lessons per week.

The Shaping Skills Workshop

What do you need for the Shaping Skills Workshop?

The PORTL manual

During the classes in this workshop, you will have readings and activities from the PORTL manual. The manual is available as a printed book or an ebook: <https://behaviorexplorer.com/store/>

After registering for the class, you will receive a coupon code that will allow you to purchase the printed manual for 50% off.

A PORTL kit

You can make your own PORTL kit:

<https://behaviorexplorer.com/articles/portl-kit-instructions/>

Or, you can purchase a PORTL kit from Behavior Explorer:

<https://behaviorexplorer.com/store/>

An adult human helper

You'll need a family member or friend to help you in person with the PORTL activities. This helper just needs to be a willing learner. They do not need to have an interest in shaping. If you will have limited access to this person, you may want to chat with us for some scheduling suggestions.

An animal helper

You will practice teaching behaviors to a pet. This animal does not need to have any training experience. However, the animal should be comfortable interacting with you.

The animal does not need to live with you. However, you will want to have access to the animal at least 1–2 times per week, particularly during the second half of the class.

A tripod (optional)

You will be asked to record some of your teaching sessions. Having a small tripod for your phone or camera will make recording easier.