

# This Week's Citation Classic™

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Bower G H & Hilgard E R. *Theories of learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981. 647 p.  
[Stanford University, CA]

This textbook reviews the major theories and systematic viewpoints regarding the psychology of learning and behavior. Historically significant positions are discussed and evaluated in relation to current research. Additional chapters on recent developments review new findings in conditioning, memory, school learning, neurophysiology, and computer modeling of learning. [The *Science Citation Index*® (SCI®) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI®) indicate that all five editions of this book have been cited in over 655 publications since 1955.]

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"*Theories of Learning* is now in its fifth edition. Ernest Hilgard wrote the first two editions, published in 1948<sup>1</sup> and 1956;<sup>2</sup> I came aboard as a coauthor in the third edition (1966)<sup>3</sup> and assumed more responsibility for the book's contents in its fourth (1975)<sup>4</sup> and fifth (1981) editions. The first edition appeared when learning theory was the dominant orientation of the main movers of psychology, when Clark Hull, Edwin Guthrie, Wolfgang Kohler, Kenneth Spence, Edward Tolman, and B.F. Skinner were vigorous spokesmen for their view of psychology. In those days, theorizing in psychology was practically synonymous with theorizing about learning and behavior. The first edition of *Theories of Learning* summarized the conflicting perspectives in such a fair manner that it was immediately adopted by the field as the authoritative textbook. Had citation indices been computed in those days, the text would have been a *Citation Classic* from its inception. The book's balanced, authoritative nature was prototypic of the many insightful reviews for which Hilgard became famous professionally and for which he was recognized with the NAS Award for Scientific

Reviewing given in 1984 by the National Academy of Sciences.<sup>5</sup> The award was established by Annual Reviews, Inc., and ISI®.

"Successive revisions of the book have followed the developments of the field. New material and chapters were added as theorists developed their positions in response to empirical results and arguments. As the field gradually changed its focus, to less emphasis on animal conditioning studies, new chapters were added on human memory, information processing, computer simulation and mathematical models of learning, and neurophysiology of learning and behavior. Since I participated in those research developments, Hilgard invited me to write chapters on them for the third edition. Although the text could be classified technically as a 'history' book, I have tried in the fourth and fifth editions to relate each historical position to still-active issues in recent research. I have been continually surprised at how easy it is, in modern debates, to detect issues that were foreseen and argued about by our forefathers. Besides updating each chapter, new editions also review and integrate recent developments, so that the text continues to have a contemporary flavor in its topics.

"Over its 36 years, *Theories of Learning* has been a highly recommended and used textbook. Solso<sup>6</sup> surveyed American and Canadian graduate psychology departments for their lists of recommended readings for students preparing for their PhD comprehensive or qualifying exams. *Theories of Learning* was among the few most frequently recommended readings in the 1979 survey. Moreover, it was the only psychology text that had been in this most recommended category throughout all previous, similar surveys of reading lists, conducted in 1971, 1966, 1958, and 1953. Thus, *Theories of Learning* has stood the test of time in a field that has been characterized by rapid scientific change. Perhaps the text has endured because it has changed with the times, while striving to be authoritative, balanced, and accurate. A sixth edition is currently being planned."

1. Hilgard E R. *Theories of learning*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948. 409 p.
2. .... *Theories of learning*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956. 563 p.
3. Hilgard E R & Bower G H. *Theories of learning*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966. 661 p.
4. .... *Theories of learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975. 698 p.
5. Garfield E. The 1984 NAS Award for Excellence in Scientific Reviewing: E.R. Hilgard receives sixth award for his work in psychology. *Current Contents* (24):3-6, 11 June 1984.
6. Solso R. Twenty-five years of recommended readings in psychology. *Amer. Psychol.* 34:703-5, 1979.