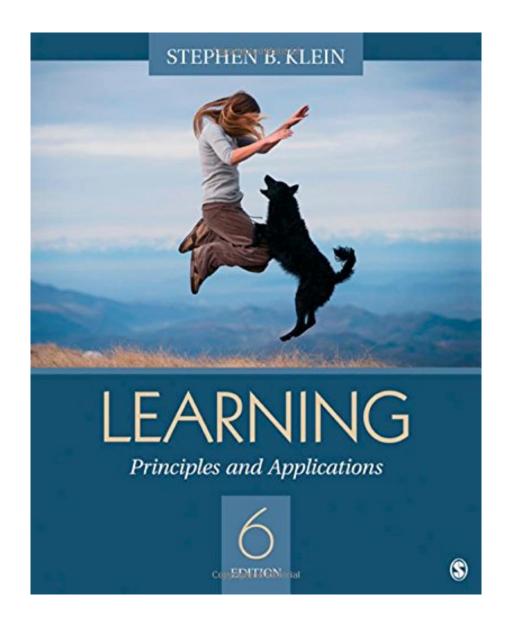


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#### Review

"An approachable text that provides the detail needed to teach a course in the Psychology of Learning while not overwhelming the students." (Charles A. Gramlich)

### About the Author

Stephen B. Klein (Phd, Psychology, Rutgers University) is a Professor of the Department of Psychology at Mississippi State University, where he has taught since 1990. He teaches a variety of undergraduate classes, including Learning Principles and Processes, Human Learning and Thinking, Theories of Learning, and Quantitative Methods, as well as graduate classes in Advanced Learning, Advanced Learning and Motivation, and Advanced Experimental Methods. His research interests are in the biological basis of learning and memory and constraints and predispositions on food preferences and aversions. His early research included investigations of aversive conditioning and flavor aversion learning. Klein has written and co-edited a number of textbooks, including Contemporary Learning Theories: Pavlovian Conditioning and the Status of Traditional Learning Theory; Handbook of Contemporary Learning Theories; and Biological Psychology, Second Edition.

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### Most helpful customer reviews

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Hosting a good ol' fashion book burning? Start here.

By James Gerhart

I'm a generally a minimalist, but this book is just horrible.

You know those old text books from the 1950s that had no side articles, personal stories, and varied layout to help keep you awake? This book fell into a time machine and somehow landed at the publishing company.

Research shows that modern text book designs are more effective because of the numerous tricks they employ to keep things interesting. A little color here, an amusing photo there, and a side box with an entertaining semi-related story go a long way. Of all topics you'd think a book titled 'Learning' would take that into account, but no sir. Not by a long shot.

This book is 100% black and white print, zero page layout effort was spent on it, and the only diagrams you get are bar graphs and a few drawings of rabbits hooked up to eye blink machines.

And the writing style is straight up cryptic. I'm rather verbally inclined and can run through most textbook chapters (lets say 70-100 pages) for 3000-4000 level courses in an hour or two. With some highlighting and a few notes on the side it takes no other effort to understand or retain the material. But this book is closer to 519 pages of journal articles. To process the material from ~30 page chapters in this book its taking me about 6 hours of reading and 5-6 pages of notes because its horrible inconsistent and frequently uses a tangled web of acronyms. For example, sometimes you'll find the \_exact\_ same concepts labeled with multiple different bold face vocabulary terms. And I mean super simple concepts like 'lowered pain threshold' having multiple vocabulary terms just 1-2 pages apart. Some of the wording requires making simple flowcharts to understand what the author is attempting to convey.

Perhaps if you're a tenured professor, doctoral candidate, or have lots of experience reviewing journal articles this book will be easier to read and understand. Actually, I worked in 2 experimental psychology research labs and reviewed literature bi-weekly and this book was still difficult to process. This book totally misses its target as undergraduate course material.

#### In review:

- This book uses nothing but the dreadful black and white linear print pages.
- Does not attempt to break the monotony with any sort of lines, text variations, side stories, or photographs.
- Uses difficult to detangle language. And this is coming from a guy who worked in a psycholinguistics lab for 2 years.
- Yes, this book is \$20-40 cheaper than comparable books that have fancier layouts and designs. No, it isn't worth the savings.

If you are a professor investigating this book, the department chair, or even on a committee selecting textbooks for a learning course I plead of you to not subject your students to this book. The professor teaching this course at my university is an excellent instructor, but I am firmly convinced his intention with this book is to push us to the maximum with a difficult book.

Please don't use this book.

3 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Badly outdated and poorly written, with factual errors

By Paul Hudgins

This book truly stands out among all of the bad textbooks I have used.

This is not an advanced book. The concepts are quite simple, but Klein has a talent for explaining simple things in the worst possible way. If you want to see for yourself, check out the diagram explaining

discrimination gradients. The book tries to come off as very technical because it contains so many descriptions of research. These are bad explainations and not very instructive at all. Another frustrating point is the use of historical jargon for the sake of jargon. He uses inconsistent terminology and makes no attempt to compare similar terms or integrate similar concepts.

What also amazed me was the list of sources in the back of the book. Most were written between 1920 and 1960. The few that were written in the 80's or later were very trivial studies. If you want to teach a course on the history of the study of learning, this is still a bad book.

Once Klein ventures beyond basic conditioning, he runs into subjects that he apparently just doesn't understand. His definition of "syntax" as a combination of phonology and grammar is a mixture of backwards and plain wrong. Just compare this section to the Wikipedia articles on the same subjects. His explanation of "algorithms" seems like a joke.

Finally, there was the chapter on "concepts." This chapter made me sad. Students are learning from this, you know. Don't look for any discussion of Piaget or schemas here. He begins with a horrible explanation of basic logic, and then goes on to discuss experiments that tested whether animals can tell the difference between different types of objects. It turns out, a pigeon can tell the difference between pictures of water and pictures of things that are not water. It's silly that money was even spent doing this research, and absurd that it was included in a textbook. All animals have to drink. Perhaps this was just included so that he could reference "modern" (meaning 1980's) research in this 2009 edition.

If you are a student, just write down the concepts that the professor mentions and look them up on Wikipedia. Better yet, drop the course and take it later with a professor that can recognize a good book.

If you are a professor, keep in mind that this book will not only fail to give your students much meaningful knowledge, it will also completely turn them off to an important field of study.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Missing important features that should be in a textbook. By Benjamin I. Gearheard This review covers the 5th edition.

At first sight, this textbook seemed daunting. There are no friendly pictures in this book, just some charts. It is mainly plain text, and it is entirely black and white. Be warned, this thing has the not quite so great effect of making the reader go cross eyed (figuratively speaking). This serves to make the book very substantive, because not much space is wasted on distracting pictures. However, it does have hundreds of charts/graphs and has some helpful tables. The bland text is boring! Also, the book is missing some things- such as when you see a word bolded in the text, you would expect to find in the margin some kind of definition, correct? Well, in this book- there are no definitions in the margin. No notes that point forward or backward. And it is true that there are different terms introduced for the exact same concept at different times in the text- how is the student to know which they should focus on?

The most helpful part of the layout I found while reading the chapters is that there are regular stopping points, where the author repeats in bulleted format some main points of what you just read (or in my case, thought I had read). There are also some questions to test your learning- so that makes reading the text a bit more active, helps retention.

Professors be warned, this text isn't that friendly- the tone and structure makes it feel somewhat like a psych

literature review, and not a friendly format for the unfamiliar student.

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