

Unit 320 Task A Assessing Animal Behaviour

What is this task about?

In this task, you will carry out behavioural assessments on **two different animals** before deciding which one is most suitable for a training programme.

You will then use your findings to design a training programme based on a recognised learning theory.

Your report should be no more than **1,500 words**.

What do I need to do?

You need to include the following sections in your report.

1. Introduction

Briefly explain:

- Why behaviour assessments are important.
- How they help trainers understand an animal before training begins.
- Why every animal should be assessed individually.

Example:

Behavioural assessments help trainers understand an animal's personality, behaviour and suitability for training. They allow training programmes to be tailored to the individual animal while promoting good welfare.

2. Carry out behavioural assessments on TWO animals

Choose two animals from the qualification range.

Examples include:

- Dog
- Horse
- Rabbit
- Guinea pig
- Goat
- Alpaca

The animals should be different species.

3. Explain the behavioural assessment method

Describe:

- Which assessment method you used.
- Why you chose it.
- How you carried it out.
- What equipment you used.

Examples of equipment:

- Lead
- Harness
- Long line
- Treats
- Toys
- Observation sheet
- Pen and clipboard

4. Record your findings

For each animal include observations such as:

Behaviour

- Calm
- Nervous
- Excitable
- Curious
- Confident

Body language

- Tail position
- Ear position
- Eye contact
- Posture
- Facial expression

Response to people

- Friendly
- Avoidant
- Nervous
- Confident

Response to the environment

- Loud noises
- New objects
- Other animals
- Distractions

Motivation

- Food
- Toys
- Praise
- Play

5. Present the results

Summarise what you discovered.

Think about:

- Which animal was easier to assess?
- Which animal was calmer?
- Which animal appeared more confident?
- Which animal was most motivated?

Use tables if helpful.

6. Select ONE animal for training

Choose the animal that would be most suitable for a training programme.

Explain:

- Why you selected it.
- Why it is more suitable than the other animal.
- How your assessment supports your decision.

7. Summarise animal learning theories

Explain the main learning theories.

Include:

Classical Conditioning

Learning by association.

Example:

A dog becomes excited when it hears its lead because it associates the sound with going for a walk.

Operant Conditioning

Learning through consequences.

Explain:

- Positive Reinforcement
- Negative Reinforcement
- Positive Punishment
- Negative Punishment

Remember:

Positive reinforcement is the most commonly used and welfare-friendly method.

8. Design a training programme

Produce a training programme for your chosen animal.

Include:

Animal details

- Species
- Breed
- Age
- Name

Behaviour to train

Example:

Teach the dog to sit.

SMART target

Example:

Teach the dog to sit on command within two weeks using positive reinforcement.

Learning theory

Explain which learning theory you will use and why.

Training aids

Examples:

- Clicker
- Treat pouch
- Food rewards
- Target stick
- Lead

Rewards

Examples:

- Food
- Praise
- Toys
- Play

Training sessions

Include:

- Session length
- Frequency
- Location
- Equipment

Success criteria

How will you know the training has worked?

Example:

The dog sits on verbal cue eight out of ten times.

How to achieve a Pass

You should:

- Describe your behavioural assessments.
- Present the assessment results.
- Select a suitable animal.
- Summarise learning theories.
- Produce a basic training programme.

How to achieve a Merit

To achieve Merit, you should also:

- Choose assessment methods that are appropriate for each individual animal.
- Explain your assessment methods accurately.
- Discuss your assessment results.
- Link your findings to the chosen animal.
- Design your programme using both the behavioural assessment and learning theory.

How to achieve a Distinction

To achieve Distinction, you should also:

- Fully justify why your assessment methods were chosen.
- Describe your assessments in detail.
- Evaluate your findings rather than simply describing them.
- Clearly justify why one animal is the most suitable.
- Produce a detailed and well-justified training programme that directly links to your behavioural assessment and chosen learning theory.

Top Tips

- Use headings throughout your report.
- Include photographs of the behavioural assessments where possible.
- Explain **why** you made each decision, not just **what** you did.
- Link every part of your training programme back to your assessment findings.
- Always consider animal welfare when making training decisions.
- Proofread your work before submitting it.