

# 6. Reinforcement Schedules and Choice Behaviour

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## Chapter Preview

### Introduction

- Instrumental responses are not usually reinforced every time they occur
- Will be looking at the effects of intermittent **schedules of reinforcement**
- Reinforcement schedules
  - Determine rate, pattern, and persistence of instrumental behaviour
  - Similar behaviour patterns occur for schedules with similar response-reinforcer relationships
    - Exact rates might differ depending on context
    - Patterns are highly predictable
  - Influence how instrumental responses are learned and maintained through reinforcement
  - Highly relevant to behaviour motivation
    - **Someone working hard or being lazy is less dependent on personality than the reinforcement schedule**
- Lab studies on reinforcement schedules usually done w/ a Skinner box
  - Provide clearly defined responses that can occur repeatedly
  - Supports detection of any changes in rate of responding

☐ **Schedule of Reinforcement:** a program or rule that determines how and when a response will be followed by delivery of the reinforcer

## Simple Schedules of Intermittent Reinforcement

### Simple Schedules

- A single factor determines which instrumental response gets reinforced
- This factor can be the number of responses made (ratio schedules) or the time that's passed since response made (interval schedules)

### Ratio Schedules

- Reinforcement only depends on the number of responses made
- **Continuous reinforcement** schedule
  - Enforces a 1:1 ratio b/w the response and reinforcement
- **Partial or Intermittent reinforcement**
  - Reinforcement doesn't happen every time req'd # of responses made
  - Response rate doesn't affect rate of reinforcement
- **Fixed-Ratio Schedules (FR)**
  - Set up so that reinforcement happens only when a certain number of responses are given
    - **FR10 → Must make 10 responses to earn 1 reinforcer**
  - Continuous reinforcement schedules are technically a type of FR
    - Fixed 1:1 ratio b/w responding & reinforcement
    - Good for quick learning
    - Doesn't maintain high rates of behaviour
      - ◻ Quickly have more reinforcers than req'd
      - ◻ Motivation becomes a problem
    - Extinction occurs rapidly
    - On a CRF schedule...
      - ◻ Steady, moderate response rate
      - ◻ Pauses are brief and unpredictable
  - Different response patterns happen w/ FR schedules that require a higher # of responses
  - Responses steady at a high rate, followed by a **post-reinforcement pause**:
    - Pauses are longer when ratio requirements are higher
    - Length of the pause correlated to the upcoming ratio requirement

☐ **Ratio Schedules:** a schedule where reinforcement depends on the number of responses the subject performs. Timing of responses doesn't matter

☐ **Continuous Reinforcement (CRF):** a schedule of reinforcement in which every occurrence of the instrumental response produces the reinforcer

☐ **Intermittent Reinforcement:** a reinforcement schedule where only some of the responses are reinforced

☐ **Fixed-Ratio Schedules (FR):** a reinforcement schedule where a fixed number of responses must occur in order for the next response to be reinforced

➤ When training on FR schedules, start with a low value (e.g. FR1), then gradually increase towards higher ratio requirements

☐ **Post-Reinforcement Pause:** a pause in responding that typically occurs after the delivery of the reinforcer on FR and FI schedules (response rate = 0)

# Chapter Reinforcement

**Rosina Ehmann**



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## **Table of Contents Chapter Reinforcement**

1. Understanding the eBook Chapter Reinforcement
  - The Rise of Digital Reading Chapter Reinforcement
  - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Chapter Reinforcement
  - Exploring Different Genres
  - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
  - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
  - Popular eBook Platforms
  - Features to Look for in an Chapter Reinforcement
  - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Chapter Reinforcement
  - Personalized Recommendations
  - Chapter Reinforcement User Reviews and Ratings
  - Chapter Reinforcement and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Chapter Reinforcement Free and Paid eBooks
  - Chapter Reinforcement Public Domain eBooks
  - Chapter Reinforcement eBook Subscription Services
  - Chapter Reinforcement Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating Chapter Reinforcement eBook Formats
  - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
  - Chapter Reinforcement Compatibility with Devices
  - Chapter Reinforcement Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
  - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Chapter Reinforcement
  - Highlighting and Note-Taking Chapter Reinforcement
  - Interactive Elements Chapter Reinforcement
8. Staying Engaged with Chapter Reinforcement

- Joining Online Reading Communities
- Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
- Following Authors and Publishers Chapter Reinforcement
- 9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Chapter Reinforcement
  - Benefits of a Digital Library
  - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Chapter Reinforcement
- 10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
  - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
  - Minimizing Distractions
  - Managing Screen Time
- 11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Chapter Reinforcement
  - Setting Reading Goals Chapter Reinforcement
  - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
- 12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Chapter Reinforcement
  - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Chapter Reinforcement
  - Distinguishing Credible Sources
- 13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
  - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
  - Exploring Educational eBooks
- 14. Embracing eBook Trends
  - Integration of Multimedia Elements
  - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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