

Schedules of Reinforcement

Schedule	Description	Response Pattern	Examples
Continuous Reinforcement	Every single response is reinforced. 100% of the time.	Fast learning Weak resistance to extinction	Training new behaviors Vending machines
Fixed-Ratio (FR) <i>Ratio = number of responses</i>	Reinforcement after a SET number of responses. <i>Example: Every 5th response reinforced (FR-5)</i>	High, steady rate Pause after reinforcement	Piece-rate pay Punch cards (Buy 10, get 1 free)
Variable-Ratio (VR) MOST ADDICTIVE <i>Ratio = number of responses</i>	Reinforcement after VARYING number of responses. Unpredictable. <i>Example: Average 5 responses, but varies (VR-5)</i>	Highest rate No pause Most resistant to extinction	Slot machines Gambling Fishing Sales commissions
Fixed-Interval (FI) <i>Interval = time-based</i>	First response after SET time period is reinforced. <i>Example: First response after 60 seconds (FI-60)</i>	Scalloped pattern Low after reward, increases as time approaches	Weekly paycheck Monthly bills Semester finals
Variable-Interval (VI) <i>Interval = time-based</i>	First response after VARYING time. Unpredictable. <i>Example: Average 60 seconds, but varies (VI-60)</i>	Moderate, steady rate More consistent than FI	Checking email Pop quizzes Fishing from shore

Key Insights

RATIO SCHEDULES (FR and VR): Based on number of responses

- More responses = more reinforcement, so higher response rates

INTERVAL SCHEDULES (FI and VI): Based on time passage

- Reinforcement available after time passes, lower response rates

VARIABLE-RATIO is MOST ADDICTIVE:

- Unpredictable rewards create "maybe next time" mentality and compulsive behavior