

Exercise walk-through

# 16.1

## Conditioning, reinforcement and observational learning: evidence and transfer

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# Concepts 1 (1)

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Classical conditioning pairs a neutral stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus until the neutral stimulus (now conditioned) evokes a conditioned response: bell then food gives bell-evoked salivation. Key phenomena: acquisition, extinction when the CS appears without the US, spontaneous recovery after a pause, generalisation to similar stimuli and discrimination between them. The CS predicts the US; timing and contingency matter. Operant conditioning changes voluntary behaviour by its consequences. Reinforcement **INCREASES** behaviour: positive adds something wanted, negative removes something aversive.

## Concepts 2

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Reinforcement schedules shape response patterns. Fixed-ratio schedules give high rates with a post-reinforcement pause; variable-ratio schedules give the highest, steadiest rates and resist extinction (gambling). Fixed-interval schedules give scalloped responding that rises near the interval end; variable-interval schedules give steady moderate rates. Ratio schedules count responses; interval schedules count time.

Observational learning needs attention to the model, retention of what was seen, the ability to reproduce it, and motivation; vicarious reinforcement (seeing the model rewarded) raises imitation. Bandura's Bobo doll studies showed children imitate filmed aggression. Modelling extends learning beyond direct experience.

## Check the transfer argument

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Every fifth response is fixed ratio: the count of responses determines reinforcement. The first response after varying intervals is variable interval: time makes reinforcement available, but a response is still required. A response count with variable requirements would instead be variable ratio. A typical response curve is not an absolute law for every task.

Accept a different explanation when its evidence and limits are justified.

## Exercises 2.1·2.2

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**2.1** Taking an aspirin to relieve a headache makes future aspirin-taking more likely. This is: [1]

A. positive reinforcement B. negative reinforcement C. positive punishment D. negative punishment E. classical conditioning

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**2.2** The highest, steadiest response rate and greatest resistance to extinction come from a: [1]

A. fixed-ratio schedule B. fixed-interval schedule C. variable-ratio schedule D. variable-interval schedule E. continuous schedule

## Exercises 2.1·2.2

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**2.1** Taking an aspirin to relieve a headache makes future aspirin-taking more likely. This is: [1]

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**2.1** Answer: B. The behaviour increases because an aversive state is removed; that is negative reinforcement. The other options do not satisfy the stated defining conditions.

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**2.2** The highest, steadiest response rate and greatest resistance to extinction come from a: [1]

A. fixed-ratio schedule B. fixed-interval schedule C. variable-ratio schedule D. variable-interval schedule E. continuous schedule

**2.2** Answer: C. Variable-ratio schedules pay after an unpredictable number of responses, sustaining rapid steady responding. Compare the exact process, design or evidence, rather than an associated keyword.

## Exercises 2.3-3.1

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**2.3** Revisit the worked case. State one conclusion its evidence supports and one stronger conclusion it does not support. Explain the difference. [2]

### 3 Exam-style questions

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**3.1** Rewards follow every fifth response in one task and the first response after varying time intervals in another. Identify the schedules and the condition that earns each reward. Give the interpretation, supporting reasoning, a relevant alternative or limitation, and an appropriate check. [4]

## Exercises 2.3-3.1

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**2.3** Revisit the worked case. State one conclusion its evidence supports and one stronger conclusion it does not support. Explain the difference. [2]

### 3 Exam-style questions

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**2.3** Use the worked case evidence to support a bounded claim and explain why a causal, universal or stronger claim needs additional evidence. The claim must fit the specific design and observed process.

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**3.1** Rewards follow every fifth response in one task and the first response after varying time intervals in another. Identify the schedules and the condition that earns each reward. Give the interpretation, supporting reasoning, a relevant alternative or limitation, and an appropriate check. [4]

**3.1** Every fifth response is fixed ratio: the count of responses determines reinforcement. The first response after varying intervals is variable interval: time makes reinforcement available, but a response is still required. A response count with variable requirements would instead be variable ratio. A typical response curve is not an absolute law for every task. Award B1 each (authored) for the interpretation, its reasoning, a relevant limitation/alternative and an appropriate check, up to four points. Accept a different justified answer satisfying these demands.