

# Examples of Positive and Negative Reinforcement and Punishment

## Positive Reinforcement

- Giving a child a compliment or candy for a job well done.
- Getting paid for a completed task.
- Watching your favorite TV show after doing all your homework.
- Dolphin gets a fish for doing a trick.
- Dog gets a treat for sitting, laying, rolling over.
- Get a candy bar for putting money in the machine.

## Negative Reinforcement

“the removal of a negative stimulus following a response”

- Scratching an insect bite that itches (reinforces scratching behavior by removing itch)
- Rubbing itchy eyes (reinforces rubbing behavior by removing itch)
- Daydreaming or doodling in boring class (reinforces daydreaming behavior by removing boredom)
- Studying when you worry about a test (reinforces study behavior by reducing worry)

OR

- Watching TV when you worry about a test (procrastination or giving up on it) (reinforces TV watching behavior by removing worry)
- Taking a pain reliever to reduce pain (reinforces pill-taking behavior by removing pain)

## Positive Punishment

- Yelling “No!” at a dog jumping up on a person (adds scold to reduce behavior)
- Spanking a child
- Swatting a dog with a newspaper for peeing on the carpet.
- A speeding ticket for speeding.
- Squirting a cat for eating the plants.
- Burning your hand when you touch a hot stove.
- Getting nauseous after eating rotten food.

## Negative Punishment

- Child has a toy taken away for fighting with his sister.
- Teen is grounded for misbehavior.
- Dolphin trainer walks away with fish bucket when the dolphin gets aggressive.
- One person in a relationship stops talking to the other in response to a behavior.

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## Schedules of Reinforcement

### Continuous Reinforcement

- Using a token to ride the subway.
- Putting a dime in the parking meter.
- Putting coins in a vending machine to get candy or soda.

## **Partial Schedules of Reinforcement**

### Fixed-Ratio

- Taking a multi-item test. As soon as you finish the those items, you can leave (also an examples of negative reinforcement).
- Garment worker gets paid per each 100 dresses sewn.
- Frequent-flyer programs.
- Teenager jobs when getting paid for a completed job, not hourly (ex: \$20 each time you mow the neighbor's lawn).
- Doing 20 sit-ups to keep fit.
- Mailman on route – must visit the same amount of houses each day to go home.

### Variable-Ratio

- Playing a slot machine – the machine is programmed to pay off after a certain number of responses have been made, but that number keeps changing. This type of schedules creates a steady rate of responding, because players know if they play long enough, they will win. It could be the next pull.
- Hunting – you probably won't hit something every time you fire, but it's not the amount of time that passes, but the number of times you shoot at a prey that will determine how much game you will catch.
- Sales commission – you have to talk to many customers before you make a sale, and you never know whether the next one will buy.
- Phone sales – same as commission.
- Buying lottery tickets.
- Playing bingo.
- Signaling while hitchhiking.
- Fishing (think fly-fishing or lure-fishing, where it depends on the cast, not sitting by a bobber, which would be VI).
- Custodian cleaning the school – sometimes rooms are already fairly clean, sometimes they have to clean after a lab or “party.”

### Fixed-Interval

- Test preparation when you know the date and time of the test ahead of time. As the time goes by and you haven't studied, you have to make up for it all by the predetermined time – and this means cramming.
- Picking up a salary check – every week or once every two weeks.
- Looking at your watch during a lecture.
- Checking cookies in the oven when you know how long it takes to bake.

### Variable-Interval

- Pop quizzes – theoretically causes a steady rate of studying because you never know when they'll occur, so you have to be prepared all the time.
- Dialing a friend and getting a busy signal – this means that you'll have to keep dialing every few minutes because you don't know when the line will be available. Reinforcement doesn't depend on the number of times you dial, but the unknown amount of time that passes.
- Watching a football game, waiting for a touchdown. It could happen anytime – if you leave the room, you may miss it, so you have to keep watching continuously.
- Speed traps on the highway.