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Reinforcement Schedules Practice Questions for RBTs (PDF)

A reinforcement schedule describes when a response is reinforced, and the four common schedules differ in whether they depend on the number of responses or on the passage of time, and whether that requirement is fixed or varies. This set helps you tell them apart from scenario descriptions. You will also see questions about how each schedule affects responding and how an RBT should move from dense to thinner schedules. Use the scenario wording, not your memory of the names, to decide which schedule is in place. The schedule terms are easy to memorize, but the scenarios test whether you can apply them to a real pattern of responding.

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Practice questions

Answer every question before you look at the key, then check yourself on the next pages.

1. The RBT becomes aware that the client began a new medication the previous day. What should the RBT do?

- **A** Wait to see whether the variable recurs over the next three sessions before telling the supervisor.
- **B** Note the variable in factual terms and make sure the supervisor learns of it promptly.
- **C** Promptly state in the session note that the variable is the reason for any change in behavior.
- **D** Discard today's data, since a session with this variable does not reflect typical performance.

2. The plan for greeting a peer calls for reinforcing every third correct response by Sofia. After the third correct response, what should the RBT do?

- **A** Reinforce it, then switch to reinforcing every correct response after it
- **B** Vary the count around three so the learner cannot predict reinforcement
- **C** Give three reinforcers at once to make up for the unreinforced responses
- **D** Reinforce the third correct response right away and restart the count

3. The RBT is scheduled to run a functional analysis condition but has had no rehearsal or feedback. What is the ethical next step?

- **A** Study the written protocol, watch a training video, and begin at the next session with extra care.
- **B** Ask a more experienced RBT to run it first, watch a few sessions, and then take over the procedure.
- **C** Tell the supervisor and note it, train with rehearsal and feedback, and start once competence is confirmed.
- **D** Tell the supervisor, try it once with the client while the supervisor is on call, and get feedback after.

4. Leo has enough tokens to buy a turn listening to a favorite song from the posted menu at the scheduled exchange time. What should occur?

- **A** Delay the exchange until the next session to build tolerance for waiting
- **B** Honor the posted price and remove only the tokens that were spent
- **C** Clear the board completely so each session starts from zero tokens
- **D** Raise the price a little so the learner keeps working for the item

5. Mina's Pearson VUE appointment now conflicts with required workplace training, and the reschedule window is close. What should she do about the work conflict?

- **A** Skip the training and tell the supervisor after the appointment is over
- **B** Contact the supervisor through the usual chain before changing work
- **C** Ask the supervisor to tell families the BACB changed services
- **D** Move client sessions first and update the supervisor later

6. The RBT learns that a teacher reports that a visual schedule was moved to another wall. How should this information be handled?

- **A** Relay the input to the supervisor promptly and follow the supervisor's direction on next steps.
- **B** Promptly give the person advice on the issue, since the RBT works with the client most often.
- **C** Wait to see whether the issue shows up in session data before deciding to mention it to anyone.
- **D** Put it in today's session note right away, since the supervisor will see it at the next note review.

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7. During toothbrushing practice, Ana earns a token after every third completed step. Which delivery rule is shown?

- **A** Fixed ratio delivery
- **B** Variable ratio delivery
- **C** Fixed interval delivery
- **D** Variable interval delivery

8. Before continuing a program, the RBT realizes that a caregiver requests a change to the reinforcement schedule. What should the RBT do?

- **A** Promptly ask whichever adult is present, such as a teacher or caregiver, to decide how to proceed.
- **B** Carry on as usual and keep the issue out of the record so that today's data stay consistent.
- **C** Keep running the written plan as trained, document the issue, and consult the supervisor right away.
- **D** Use a reasonable workaround for the time being and tell the supervisor at the next monthly meeting.

9. The RBT wonders whether walking away during a scheduled break meets the target. Which resource should make the distinction objective?

- **A** The judgment of the most experienced staff member present at the time
- **B** A written record of the learner's account of whether the action was the target
- **C** A written list of similar-looking actions that fall outside the target
- **D** A standing rule to count the action for now and let the graph trend sort it out

10. Which documentation approach is most objective for this event: Ava answered 7 of 9 receptive-label trials correctly before the scheduled break?

- **A** Include the RBT's personal reaction to the event so the supervisor understands how it went.
- **B** Report the measured result and its timing, then name the function the behavior most likely served.
- **C** Use general terms such as 'often' or 'a lot' so that the note stays short and easy to read.
- **D** Report what was seen and measured, when it happened, and what was done, using neutral terms.

11. Aisha asks to check her picture schedule many times each session. The behavior is fine occasionally, so the plan reinforces it only when its rate stays at or below a criterion. Which procedure is this?

- **A** DRL
- **B** Response cost
- **C** DRO
- **D** DRI

12. The antecedent plan for Maya's calling out calls for delivering brief teacher attention on a time-based schedule, regardless of behavior. Which procedure is this?

- **A** Noncontingent reinforcement (NCR)
- **B** Differential reinforcement of low rates (DRL)
- **C** Response cost applied to the behavior
- **D** Extinction of the problem behavior

Answer key and explanations

1. Correct answer: B · Note the variable in factual terms and make sure the supervisor learns of it promptly.

Illness, medication, schedule, setting, staffing, and material changes can affect progress. The RBT records observable facts and reports them without diagnosing or discarding valid data. Keep the entry to the details needed to interpret the session, which also protects client confidentiality. Record the context, keep valid data, and avoid causal claims outside your role.

Task: E.3

2. Correct answer: D · Reinforce the third correct response right away and restart the count

The third correct response meets the programmed fixed-ratio requirement. Immediate, contingent delivery preserves the response–reinforcer relation. Follow the written schedule and deliver reinforcement promptly when its requirement is met.

Task: C.1

3. Correct answer: C · Tell the supervisor and note it, train with rehearsal and feedback, and start once competence is confirmed.

RBTs provide services only after their supervisor confirms they have demonstrated competence (1.06) and do not use unfamiliar interventions without proper training (2.04). When asked to go beyond their competence, they tell the supervisor right away and document it; restrictive procedures also need a documented plan and supervisor-verified competence (2.05). Competence must be confirmed by the supervisor before service, not assumed after exposure.

Task: F.2

4. Correct answer: B · Honor the posted price and remove only the tokens that were spent

Reliable exchange is necessary for tokens to retain reinforcing value. Prices and rules should not change arbitrarily. A token system works only when exchange rules are predictable and honored.

Task: C.11

5. Correct answer: B · Contact the supervisor through the usual chain before changing work

The TCO E.2 task is to seek and prioritize timely clinical direction through the chain of command.

Task: E.2

6. Correct answer: A · Relay the input to the supervisor promptly and follow the supervisor's direction on next steps.

RBTs communicate intervention-team concerns and suggestions to their supervisor in a timely way. They do not independently redesign treatment or filter out information based on their own clinical judgment. Relay team input; do not independently turn it into a treatment change.

Task: E.1

7. Correct answer: A · Fixed ratio delivery

C.1 includes reinforcement according to schedules, and this rule delivers reinforcement after a fixed response count.

Task: C.1

8. Correct answer: C · Keep running the written plan as trained, document the issue, and consult the supervisor right away.

When training, data, or procedural concerns arise, the RBT seeks and prioritizes timely clinical direction. Safety and the written plan guide what can continue while clarification is obtained. When a task is beyond the RBT's training or competence, the supervisor should hear about it right away, and that conversation should be documented. Uncertainty is a signal to seek timely direction, not to improvise or conceal.

Task: E.2

9. Correct answer: C · A written list of similar-looking actions that fall outside the target

Nonexamples and contextual exclusions clarify actions that resemble the target but should not be scored. Good definitions say what counts and what does not count.

Task: A.5

10. Correct answer: D · Report what was seen and measured, when it happened, and what was done, using neutral terms.

Session documentation should be objective, accurate, and compliant with legal, regulatory, and workplace requirements. Observable descriptions and data replace labels, motives, omissions, or copied boilerplate. If another trained observer could not verify the wording, make it more objective.

Task: E.4

11. Correct answer: A · DRL

DRL is used when a behavior is acceptable at a lower frequency and reinforcement depends on meeting that rate criterion. Use DRL for "less often," not "never."

Task: D.3

12. Correct answer: A · Noncontingent reinforcement (NCR)

NCR delivers the functional reinforcer according to time rather than contingent on problem behavior, reducing motivation to obtain it through that behavior. NCR is scheduled access to a relevant reinforcer independent of problem behavior.

Task: D.2

Study tips

- Sort each schedule by two questions: is the requirement based on responses or time, and does it stay fixed or vary?
- Associate continuous reinforcement with learning new skills, then thin reinforcement as the skill grows.
- Notice that variable schedules usually maintain responding more steadily than fixed schedules.
- Read the stem for the words 'every', 'after', and 'on average' to decide the category quickly.

FAQ

What is a variable ratio schedule?

A variable ratio schedule reinforces a response after a varying number of responses, around an average requirement.

Is continuous reinforcement useful when teaching a new skill?

Yes. Reinforcing every correct response is often used early in learning, and the schedule is then thinned as the skill becomes stable.

Does this set explain how to thin a schedule?

It focuses on identifying schedules from scenarios. Thinning decisions depend on the plan and the data, so confirm them with the supervisor.

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