RBT® CHEAT SHEET · BEHAVIOR REDUCTION · D.2, D.3

# Differential reinforcement: DRA, DRI, DRO, DRL, FCT

Reinforce something better and stop reinforcing the problem behavior. One question names the variation: what earns the reinforcer?

## What earns the reinforcer? D.3

| Procedure | The reinforcer follows… | Example | Watch for |
|---|---|---|---|
| **DRA: alternative** | A specific, more appropriate behavior | Leo is called on and praised when he raises his hand; calling out gets no response. | The alternative need not be incompatible; often both can occur. |
| **DRI: incompatible** | A behavior that cannot happen at the same time as the problem behavior | Grace holds a squishy toy with both hands while watching TV, instead of pulling her sister's hair. | A kind of DRA. |
| **DRO: other** | A set interval with **no** problem behavior | Omar earns a token for every 3 minutes without spitting. Spitting resets the timer. | Also called omission training. |
| **DRL: low rates** | The behavior at or below a set rate | Lena earns a break for any hour with 10 or fewer check-ins with her job coach. | Allows some responding, so not for dangerous behavior. |
| **FCT: functional communication** | A communication response that gets the same reinforcer | Mateo hands over a "break" card and gets a short break right away. | A form of DRA. Match the function. |
| **NCR (not differential)** | Nothing. The reinforcer comes on a time schedule. | Attention every few minutes, whatever the learner is doing. | An antecedent strategy, below. |

## Two parts, every time D.3

- Reinforce the target named in the plan, **and** withhold reinforcement for the problem behavior (extinction).
- Match the function: the new behavior earns the reinforcer the problem behavior used to get.
- Start rich: reinforce the replacement every time at first. Your supervisor thins the schedule later.
- Expect a possible burst when problem behavior stops working. Keep following the plan, record and tell your supervisor.
- **Non-example:** Leo's teacher praises hand raising but still answers whenever he calls out. Calling out still pays, so this is not differential reinforcement.

## Antecedent strategies: before the behavior D.2

| Strategy | How it runs |
|---|---|
| **NCR** | The reinforcer comes on a fixed-time or variable-time schedule, independent of behavior. It works best when it matches the function. |
| **High-p sequence** | About three quick, easy requests the learner almost always follows, each reinforced, then the harder request right away. |
| **Demand fading** | Start with few or no demands, then add them back in small steps while problem behavior stays low. |

Your supervisor picks the strategy, the reinforcer and the schedule. Deliver NCR on the clock, not only when the learner is "being good."

## Exam traps

**DRA or DRI?** Could the two behaviors happen at the same time? Yes is DRA (raising a hand while calling out). No is DRI.

**DRO or NCR?** Does the reinforcer depend on the problem behavior not happening? Yes is DRO. A clock alone is NCR.

**DRO or DRL?** DRO aims for none of the behavior; DRL aims for less of it.

**High-p or demand fading?** Easy requests seconds before one hard request, or less work added back across sessions?

**"Just this once"** giving a break after screaming during FCT teaches that screaming still works.

**DRO timing:** a reinforcer delivered right after another problem behavior can strengthen it. Note it and tell your supervisor.

**High-p after problem behavior** removes the hard demand and can reinforce the screaming. Use the sequence before the hard request.

**Thinning on your own:** if a learner asks for a break every minute, keep following the plan and share the data.

## Read the free lesson

D.3 Apply differential reinforcement: DRA, DRO, DRI, DRL, and FCT

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