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Time Horizon and Temporal Shaping

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TIME HORIZON AND TEMPORAL SHAPING

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Previous experiments (Timberlake, Gawley and Lucas, 1987) have suggested that rats are unable to anticipate future food if it is delayed by 16 minutes or more. The present experiment investigated whether this interval could be lengthened by gradually incrementing the length of delay. Ten rats chose between an immediate progressive ratio schedule and a delayed continuous reinforcement schedule. The experiment had two groups. In one group, the continuous reinforcement schedule was initially presented 5 seconds after the progressive ratio schedule, then each successive day the delay was incremented by 30%. For the other group, the control group, the delay was a constant thirty minutes. We predict that a gradual increment of time will enable the rat to anticipate food over longer intervals.