SKINNER BOX IN GAMES: WHY IT DOES NOT ALWAYS WORK

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Though many consider the Skinner box somewhat a misnomer, this term has long entered the spheres of both gaming and game design. In its common usage, the Skinner box usually defines a set of particular techniques of rewarding the players in such a way that they become subconsciously addicted to the game, willing to play it even when they do not receive additional entertainment or intellectual value from the process. The logic of Skinner box implies a system of random rewards that are bestowed upon the player regularly and purposefully, therefore subconsciously persuading them that each minute spent not playing the game is a missed opportunity. The user thus may and will keep playing the game not for a stimulating challenge or rich entertainment value, but simply because they feel that putting it away would be too high a price to pay. The Skinner box is an effective tool of increasing user retention and has become especially dominant in mobile gaming, where games rely on short but desirably regular sessions. However, some of the current trends show that users have become tired of the Skinner box so frequently being placed at the very heart of the gameplay, and while the technique itself is not necessarily immoral, basing one's game on it alone, without aspirations to create original, interesting and engaging content, may prove disastrous from the game design perspective in the long run.