

Age Appropriate Reward Systems

Toddlers & Preschoolers

- * Toddlers and preschoolers benefit from simple sticker charts. Allow your child to decorate a piece of paper and use that as your chart. If he takes part in coloring it or designing it, he'll be more invested in earning stickers.
- * You can also increase motivation by choosing stickers your child will love. You might even let them choose the stickers themselves. Just make sure not to hand over any stickers until they are earned.
- * Keep the sticker chart prominently displayed. Preschoolers are often very proud of their accomplishments and want to ensure everyone is aware they have earned stickers. Use praise to motivate him to keep earning stickers.
- * Choose one behavior to work on at a time and establish a simple goal to start. Behaviors that can work well with a sticker chart include things such as using the toilet and staying in his or her own bed at night.
- * Provide a sticker immediately after you see the desired behavior to provide positive reinforcement for good behavior.

School Aged Children

- * Stickers alone usually aren't enough to motivate school-age children. They require tangible rewards to stay motivated.
- * But they can also handle more complex reward systems. So you can tackle bigger goals or even more than one behavior at a time.
- * You can use a sticker chart the same you would with a younger child and then allow your child to trade stickers in for bigger rewards.
- * Just make sure your child earns rewards on a regular basis. Some school-age children still need daily rewards, while others can wait several days to get an incentive.
- * Explain the reward system to your child. Try saying something like, "When you earn three stickers, we will go to the park to play. This is how you earn stickers..." Allow your child an opportunity to ask questions and become involved in suggesting rewards he or she wants to earn.

Tweens

- * Tweens can benefit from more complicated systems with bigger rewards. But remember, rewards don't have to cost money. Screen time or a later bedtime on the weekends can be big motivators.
- * Tweens may feel too old for “stickers” so you can use a system where they earn check marks or tokens. A token economy system allows them to earn tokens throughout the day that can be exchanged for reward items. For example, two tokens may be equivalent to thirty minutes of television.
- * Choose up to three behaviors to address at a time. Pick at least one behavior that your child already does fairly well. This can help your child feel successful, which is key to keeping a tween motivated.

Teenagers

- * Teenagers will outgrow formal reward charts and systems. However, this doesn't mean you have to get rid of reward systems altogether. Create a behavior management contract to link privileges to specific behavior.
- * For example, link your teen's ability to go to the movies with his friends to getting his homework done on time all week. Or, only allow your teen to borrow the car when he gets his chores done on all time all week.
- * Electronics are also another privilege that works well for many teens. Consider giving cellphone privileges each day only after their homework and chores are completed. Just make sure that you establish clear rules ahead of time so your child understands what you expect each day.