



REWARDS & INCENTIVES

DESIGNING A REWARD SYSTEM FOR YOUR CHILD

Most of us, at some stage in our school or work lives, have put off doing something that we needed to do. Often, procrastination happens because (1) we don't like doing the task (even though we can), or (2) we aren't very good at the task. When deciding how to motivate your child to start/finish tasks they're putting off, it is vital to be sure that they can do the task required of them (if they can't do it, the focus needs to be on teaching them the required skill).

If your child is in scenario #1, the goal is to inspire your child to overcome their desire to quit or do something else and put effort into what they're avoiding. Here are steps to help you design an incentive system for your child:

2

Set a goal.

Dan will remove his lunchbox, jacket, drink bottle, and reader bag from his backpack before 4:30pm (Mon-Fri).

1

Describe the "hurdle" or "problem" behaviour.

Forgetting to unpack backpack after school.

3

Create a menu of rewards that your child can select from. Make sure to include big, medium, and small-sized rewards on this list.

4

With your child, create a behaviour contract. These clearly outline each person's responsibilities, rewards and penalties (if any) for adhering to the agreement.

5

Frequently review how well the system is working to decide if changes need to be made to the current plan OR if your child is ready to improve another skill or behaviour (make a new contract).

6

Praise your child for their positive behaviours. Praise is best given immediately after the desired behaviour, specifies exactly what the positive behaviour is, highlights the importance of the behaviour, acknowledges the child's effort, and prompts the child to realise their task-related/problem-solving behaviour.

Example of effective praise:

You tried so hard to get dressed quickly this morning - this makes it easier to get to school on time! I like how you checked your visual schedule to figure out what you needed to do to get ready for the day.

Behaviour Contract Template

Examples and blank templates for creating behaviour contracts can be found at:

www.understood.org/en/family/managing-everyday-challenges/daily-expectations-child/download-parent-child-behavior-contracts

Menu of Rewards

BIG rewards are those that are earned over the long-term. E.g., expensive items (toys or activities)
MEDIUM rewards are those that can be earned on a weekly basis. E.g., choice of dinner
SMALL rewards are those that can be earned often/daily. E.g., access to a game or free time