



Reworking Rewards for Success

Rewards are one common way to improve child behavior. Rewards are a great tool, but they can easily become ineffective or too complicated. The tips will help you use rewards in a way that is manageable and effective for most families. You can watch a video on this topic by clicking this [link](#) or scanning the above QR code with your mobile device.

Building Effective Rewards

- **Be specific.** The clearer, simpler, and more specific you are, the easier it will be for your child to do what you want. It's best to focus on what you want your child to *do*, not what you don't want them to do.
- **Target Small Improvements.** For rewards to work, your child must be able to earn them, so give rewards for small and achievable improvements. As your child's behavior improves, gradually increase the expectation for earning the same reward.
- **Give rewards quickly and frequently.** Try to consistently provide the reward as soon as you can after the behavior that earned it. This helps the child to associate the behavior with the reward.
- **Smaller is better.** Because we want rewards to be given quickly and frequently, rewards should be relatively small and easy to give.

Avoid these Common Mistakes

- **Being too vague.** It's important your child knows exactly how rewards will be earned. The clearer and more specific you are, the easier it will be for your child to understand the reward's purpose.
- **Expecting too much at once.** Rewards are like teaching and learning takes time. Asking for perfect behavior or long stretches without slip-ups probably won't work.
- **Waiting too long to give rewards.** The more time taken between the good behavior and giving the reward, the less it will help your child associate the two.
- **Rewards that are too big.** Big rewards are exciting, but usually can't be sustained. Because learning is a gradual process, you'll probably need to give many rewards to get the results you want.

Tips to Try

- **Work together.** Children will be more invested in rewards if they have input.
- **Make rewards special.** Restrict access to rewards so your child still wants to earn them.
 - Make sure the rewards you select aren't available at other times. If your child can get the rewards without earning them, there is no reason to improve behavior.
- **Refresh rewards.** Add new and different rewards if your child loses interest (this is normal). Note that rewards don't need to be things. They can be special activities or privileges (see some examples below).
- **Gradually raise the bar.** As behavior improves, you can set expectations for earning rewards slightly higher. This encourages continued progress.

Ideas for Rewards

Here are some ideas for good rewards. You can add to these lists with custom rewards your child might like.

Extra Privileges	Parent-Child Activities	Things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying up late • Sleeping in • Having a friend over • Skipping a chore • Pick a meal • Choose show to watch • Extra screen time • Extra outside time • Paint fingernails • Wear cologne or perfume • Wear jewelry • Bubble bath • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a game • Play dress-up • Go to the park • Play catch • Have a slumber party • Make a snack or meal • Ride bikes • Go for a walk • Create an art project • Blow bubbles • Play in the sprinkler • Fly a kite • Being "in charge" of parent for 10 min • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art supplies • Clothes • Costume jewelry • Temporary tattoos • Trading cards • Small toys or trinkets • Special snacks • Music • Games • School supplies • Room decorations • Stickers/stamps • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- • ----- • -----