



Reward or Bribe:

**Knowing the
Difference and
Using Rewards to
Help Your Children
Learn**

Let's Grow!

*If a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower –
Alexander den Heijer*



Reasons to Use Rewards

Behaviors are more likely to happen again when followed by a “reinforcer” (reward).

- Encourage good behaviors
Help your child do more of the things that help them and your family thrive!
- Increase self-esteem
Nobody likes to be corrected all the time!
- Control over their environment
Help your child gain control over their environment by making good choices
- Strengthen your bond
You are happy because your child is doing things you want
Your child is happy because they are getting things they like
- A happy and engaged child
Your child will be more engaged with home life and happier about participating

Is it a reward or a bribe?



Reward

- Things that are given AFTER a behavior occurs that make it more likely to happen again in the future
- First behavior, then reward

Is it a reward or a bribe?



Bribe

- Things that are given BEFORE a behavior occurs, with the promise that they child will engage in the behavior later
- First bribe, then behavior

What are the possible problems?
What does the child learn?

Is it a reward or a bribe?



Is it a bribe if I tell my child what to do to earn a reward?

- Nope
- Telling your child the expectation is not the same as a bribe
- Just be sure to follow-through!

What should I reward?



Behaviors to Reward

Use rewards to encourage any behavior that you want your child to repeat

- Playing quietly
- Waiting patiently
- Playing nicely with a sibling
- Following directions
- Completing chores
- Staying in bed at bedtime
- Eating new foods
- And many more...

Types of Rewards

Social

- Attention
- Hug/Affection
- Praise
- High Five
- Thumbs Up
- Clapping and cheering
- Positive Feedback (descriptive)

Types of Rewards

- 2 “Tangibles”
- Toys
 - Books
 - Money
 - Stickers

Types of Rewards

3 Activities

- Extra Time
- Outings
- Playing Games
- Reading a Story
- Being a helper
- Staying up late
- Extra privileges

Types of Rewards

4 Systems

- Token System
- Behavior Contracts

(stay tuned for more on systems!)



Motivation

Does your child think it is a reward?

- We must use what *is* motivating to the child, not what we think *should be* motivating
- If your child isn't interested in it, it's not motivating to earn

Potential Pitfall



Does your child know HOW?

- If your child isn't doing the behavior, it could be they are not motivated for the reward or....
- It could be that they don't understand what you want or...
- It could be that they don't know HOW to do what you are asking

Shaping

You might need to break a behavior down into smaller steps or “work up to” the behavior that you want

It's like playing “hot and cold,” except that we are only going to reward (say “hot”) as the behavior gets closer to what we want

Reward Systems

Because giving a big “reward” every time a behavior happens isn’t always realistic



Reward Program

Identify the specific behavior you want to reward

Pick no more than 3. One is perfectly okay!

Make sure that they are **do**, not **don't do**

Be as specific as possible so that you there is no doubt when the behavior happens

Reward Program

Identify the specific behavior you want to reward

Pick a reward

Follows the tips already discussed!

Pick something big enough to be an incentive

Begin thinking about the smaller step “tokens” or “rewards” that will be earned along the way

Reward Program

Identify the specific behavior you want to reward

Pick a reward

Create a chart

Be creative – use things your child likes!

Decide on how many “tokens” are needed to get the big reward

Set up a creative display

Reward Program

Identify the specific behavior you want to reward

Pick a reward

Create a chart

Explain the system to your child

Be sure to use clear, and child-friendly,
language

Reward Program

Identify the specific behavior you want to reward



Pick a reward



Create a chart



Explain the system to your child



Use it!

Mystery System



- Place items inside of closed container (for example, plastic eggs)
- Pick an “egg” when the behavior occurs
- Variation: some eggs have larger rewards
- Think “Advent Calendar” – only earned!

Puzzle Tokens



- Using a picture of the reward
- Cut the picture into puzzle pieces, as many as you need
- Give a puzzle piece when the behavior occurs

Spell it Out



- Earn a letter when the behavior occurs

Reward Jar



- Fill up the reward jar, instead of a token board or chart

And so many more...



- Reward coupons
- Lottery
- Bingo
- And the old classic, the Treasure Box

Tips for Effective Use



- Make sure expectations and directions are clear
- Follow-through
- Use lots of social praise – positive attention and praise is the BEST reward!
- But make sure the praise is sincere. And exciting!
- Be consistent
- Reward the process (small steps), not just the result

Tips for Effective Use



- Be sure it is a reward
 - At all
 - Right now
- Don't let the reward get boring – mix things up!
- Pay attention to sensory preferences
- Slowly shift to less frequent rewards and to more natural rewards
- Don't put everything on a reward program. Not everything needs to be earned

Start small

- Start small and easy
- Be consistent
- Don't use bribes (I will give you that now then you do what I want)
- Be the one in control



Catch them being good

- It's an old saying, but it's true. When your child does something awesome, let them know!



Your turn



Your questions, answered

