

Setting up your reward chart

It's important to change a child's negative behaviors as early as possible. It's also important to recognize, encourage, and reinforce positive behaviors if you want to change the negative ones. A reward chart can be very helpful in such cases. When setting up your chart, here are some pointers:

- Choose one or a few behaviors that you want to encourage or change
- Once you've chosen the behavior/s you want to improve, use positive and easy to understand statements to describe them. This is especially important if you're working with younger children.
- Set up your chart
- If you have younger children, you can involve them in the process of designing the chart or choosing the indicators. You have to create a chart which will keep them excited and motivated to go through with the whole reward system for kids.
- Choose a number of short-term rewards
- Most of the children want to have small tokens or stickers as their reward, especially at the beginning. But, such incentives may lose their appeal after some time. So, you need to choose a number of short-term rewards which will make your child feel happy and enthusiastic each time he/she earns them.
- Place the reward indicators right after they show the good behavior
- When you place the stars, stickers, drawings or other indicators directly on the chart right after your child shows good behavior, this serves as positive reinforcement. Pairing this with kind words and phrases further reminds your child to keep on performing the behavior to get all these great rewards.
- Maintain positivity all throughout the process
- Even if your child isn't able to earn a reward for the day, try to maintain your positivity. There's always tomorrow to do better. Just keep encouraging your child and show him/her what behavior you want to see. Punishments for not reaching a goal will not work!
- Don't stick with the chart for too long. If you do this, your child might become dependent on the rewards or he will lose interest in doing the behavior because he's bored with the system. Once you see a consistent positive change, you may start phasing out the chart gradually. Either that or you can create a new chart which focuses on a different behavior.

Tips for using your reward chart as a positive tool

Trying to achieve a goal in order to get a reward is a part of life even as we grow older. Even when we work, we do our best to keep our job and keep on earning to support ourselves and our families. Of course, we also do some things in our life without the motivation of getting rewarded. We do this because we feel intrinsically motivated to do the right thing.

But when it comes to children, rewards always work better for them, especially if they haven't learned intrinsic motivation yet. But, if you plan to use a reward chart to motivate your child, make sure to do this carefully. Otherwise, you might end up teaching your child to only do good things if they're offered a reward for it.

This tool is only one part of teaching your child good values and good behaviors. If you want to get the most out of your reward chart templates, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- From the beginning, talk to your child about his behaviors. Tell him that there are certain behaviors which he needs to change and tell him why.
- Select a few of the "worst behaviors" that you want your child to change through the reward chart. For younger children, you may have to work through these behaviors one by one so you don't end up confusing them.
- If you've already made the chart, show it to your child. If you want to involve your child in the process of making the chart, then ask him/her to help you with it. Upon completion of the template, explain how the chart works. If your child helped you make the chart, you can allow him/her to place the first sticker/star, positive marks, etc. as a reward for helping you. This will provide your child with a sense of ownership, satisfaction, and achievement.
- Come up with an agreement of how many positive marks your child needs to get in a specific amount of time to get rewarded.
- Base the kind of reward to give according to how many positive marks your child received in the amount of time you've set.
- Keep using the chart until you've seen a real change in the behavior. As soon as your child has established the positive behavior, you can either stop using the chart, or you can change it to achieve a different goal.
- Make sure that the chart you make is simple, measurable, achievable, and specific.
- You can add pictures on the chart which show the behavior you want to reinforce. You can either draw these pictures or print out clip art---or photos!
- Begin with smaller goals which you know your child can easily achieve. This will allow your child to see the result right away and feel motivated by that achievement.