

Create a Token System to Improve Your Child's Behaviours

Using Rewards to Promote Good Behaviours

A token system is one of the fastest and most effective ways to get kids to follow the rules. Similar to a traditional reward system, kids earn tokens throughout the day. Then, tokens can be exchanged for bigger rewards.

Although sticker charts work well with preschool-age children, a token system will work best with older children. Whether you want to get your child to do his chores, follow directions at school, or refrain from hitting when he's angry, reward systems are effective discipline tools.

How to Create a Token System

Sometimes parents create very complicated systems that are hard for children to understand and difficult for parents to manage. It's important to keep a token system simple so that both you and your child will stay motivated.

Here's how to create your token system:

1. **Choose up to three behaviours to address at one time.** Pick a behaviour that your child is already doing well, one behaviour that needs a little improvement, and one challenging behaviour.
2. **Frame the desired behaviours in a positive way.** Instead of saying, "Don't hit your sister," create a goal like, "Keep your hands to yourself." State what behaviour you want to see so you can reward the good behaviour with a token.
3. **Break the day down into smaller chunks of time when necessary.** You might reward your child for meeting his goals in the morning, during the afternoon, and during the evening. Waiting all day to earn a token can seem like too big of a goal and many children will lose interest.
4. **Physically hand a token to your child whenever he earns one.** Provide immediate reinforcement for

good behaviour by giving your child a token for meeting his goals.

5. **Create an appealing reward menu with a variety of items.** Offer rewards worth a variety of point values to keep it exciting. Being able to stay up late might be worth one token but choosing something from the pound shop might be worth 10 tokens, for example.

Tips to Make Your Token System Effective

A good token economy system should get your child excited and help him stay motivated to do better. And while it will take a little extra effort on your part initially, an effective reward system should save you a lot of time disciplining your child in the end. Here are some tips for making your token economy system as effective as possible:

- **Use pennies, plastic poker chips, or marbles for tokens.** Make sure your child can't access the tokens. You don't want him adding his own marbles to the ones he's earned from you.
- **Help your child find a way to store his tokens.** If your child creates a special jar or box to keep his tokens in, he'll be extra motivated to earn more. Kids love to count, shake and look at their tokens.
- **Keep the token system positive.** Make sure your child knows a token system is about rewarding his good behaviour. It shouldn't be about punishing him when he makes a mistake.
- **Use some rewards that don't cost money.** They can include things such as picking what to eat for dinner, going to the park, or getting an extra bedtime story. Get your child involved by requesting his input into what rewards he would like to earn.

Troubleshooting

Token systems often take a bit of trial and error. Perhaps you made the rewards too easy to earn. Or maybe, your child just isn't motivated by the rewards you're offering.

If it isn't working to change your child's behaviour, don't give up or get rid of the reward plan altogether. Often, just a few small changes can make a big difference in helping your child change his behaviour.

Sometimes, behaviours get a little worse before they get better. Your child may have some difficulty adjusting to any new discipline strategies that you start implementing. So, make sure you give your plan plenty of time before you make any major changes to it.