

Ideas for Rewards

Here are some free and low-cost reward ideas. Make sure your child is invested in earning the incentive. While one child may be motivated by extra TV time, another child may be motivated by a nature walk. So offer rewards that are specific to your child's interests and needs.

Praise

While you shouldn't reserve praise for giant achievements, you can definitely use words of encouragement as an incentive. When your child knows you're paying attention to his effort, he'll be motivated to keep up the good work. So catch your child being good and praise his efforts often.

Tangible Rewards

There are times when praise isn't enough and kids need a little extra incentive. A treasure box filled with items from the dollar store can go a long way toward keeping kids on track. Let your child choose a reward at the end of the day if he's met his goals.

Or, consider loaning something to your child. If he loves borrowing your hat or he likes using your office chair, let him use it if he's earned it.

Later Bedtime

Although some parents are hesitant to allow kids to stay up later, allowing your child to stay up an extra 15 minutes isn't likely to make him sleep-deprived. And a later bedtime can be a big motivator for kids.

Younger kids will often feel like a "big kid" and it can be a great incentive if they are able to stay up later than their siblings. If you have a child who has difficulty sleeping though, choose a different incentive or only offer it on nights when she can sleep in a little longer the next day.

Special Activities

Choose a special activity that your child will enjoy and use it as a reward. Playing a board game together, going on a nature walk or an extra bedtime story are just a few special activities that your child might want to earn. Look for free virtual events that they can watch or participate in.

Extra Electronics Time

Although it's important to ensure your child's electronics use is limited, you can make time on digital devices a reward. Just make sure you put a cap on how much time your child can earn each day (such as a two-hour limit).

You can offer screen time rewards in 15-minute chunks. If your child follows the rules before remote learning, he might earn 15-minutes of screen time. If he has a good day at school, he might earn 15 more minutes.

You may want to pick a specific behavior to address, like respectful words or gentle touches. If your child exhibits those behaviors during the specified times, he could earn screen time.

Make a Craft Together

Most kids love to get creative and messy. And often, you can create things with regular household items.

Paper bags make great puppets. Cotton balls and glue can lead to endless creations. Build a model, make some jewelry, or get out the finger paint as a reward for good behavior.

Coupons

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Kids love to earn coupons that say things such as “get out of having to do one chore” or “get to choose your favorite meal for dinner.” Allow your child to use his coupons whenever he wants (within reason).

Food

Although it’s not a good idea to offer junk food as an incentive, there are some ways to incorporate food into a reward system. For example, allow your child to choose what’s for dinner or let her earn an indoor picnic.

Get creative and build a fort out of blankets and eat under the glow of a flashlight, if that would motivate your child to follow the rules. Baking a special treat together may also be a great motivator.

Tokens or Stickers

Token economy systems provide kids with chips or tokens on a daily basis that can later be exchanged for rewards. Provide your child with a varied reward menu that allows her to earn bigger rewards. You can offer free smaller rewards in exchange for 10 tokens.

Brainstorm Rewards Together

Ask your child what types of rewards she would like to earn. You might find simple things, like sleeping in a pillow fort or going on a nature walk, work to motivate her to behave.

Once you have your list complete, identify what she needs to do to earn her first reward. Be specific and don’t make it relatively simple for her to earn her first reward. Success will fuel her desire to keep up the good work.