

# Positive Reinforcement in the Classroom

## Methods of Reinforcement

When you are using reinforcement, it is important to remember what will actually be reinforcing to each specific child. Being aware of what interests individual students will help in identifying reinforcers that are reinforcing to them. Varying the reinforcement that is given can help to maintain the child's motivation and interest.



## Method 1: Praise



Praise can take many forms including “great job!”, “you are so smart!”, or any other relevant phrases. Praise that targets the specific behavior can help the student to understand what exactly they did correctly. An example of this is when a child cleans up their food after lunch and the teacher replies, “I like how you cleaned up after yourself”.

## Method 2: Tangible Reinforcement

These are any physical items that are given to the child directly following a behavior. Snacks, toys, and candy are popular tangible reinforcers. Edible items should be used sparingly, temporarily, or if the child does not respond to other reinforcers. An example of this is giving a treat after a child uses the toilet when you are teaching them to use the toilet.



### Method 3: Token Economy

A token economy is when a teacher provides a child with “tokens” (play coins, check marks, etc.) in exchange for desired behaviors and the child is allowed to redeem a prize (reinforcer) once they have saved up enough tokens. It is important to let the child know what they are working for and to make sure it is reinforcing to them.

#### Example:

At circle time all of the children can earn stars next to their name on a whiteboard for good behavior. Children who receive 10 stars during circle time are awarded a prize/activity once circle time is over. Award skills such as sitting quietly, answering questions, or raising their hand, etc.



### Method 4: Attention from Adults

Children often seek attention and acceptance from adults which makes this method quite motivating to most children. The attention can be verbal praise or action related. An example would be when a child does something you asked them to do and then giving them tickles or a silly game as reinforcement.



### Method 5: Special Privileges/Activities



These generally include board games, playground games, sports, art activities, etc. There are countless options for this category of reinforcement and having the child understand what they are working towards if the task is difficult will help to increase motivation.