

Positive Reinforcement

Definition

Positive reinforcement is the process of rewarding a desired behavior to increase the likelihood that it will happen again. This is done by adding something meaningful/desirable (e.g., verbal praise, token, access to preferred activity). Reinforcement helps students/people understand the relationship between their behavior and its consequences.

Strategies and Tips

Reinforce Immediately

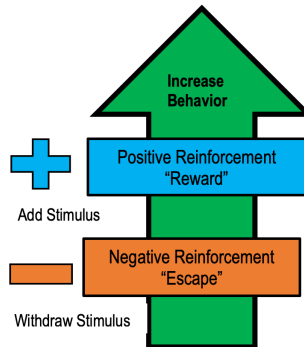
Positive reinforcement should be as immediate and consistent as possible, especially in the beginning when students are learning new skills and behaviors.

Make It Easy

Initially, set an easy target for reinforcement; reinforce each occurrence or approximation of the target behavior- then gradually increase as skills improve. Reinforcement is not about all-or-nothing. Reinforcing baby steps is key so that students won't give up.

Make Yourself a Reinforcer

Humans learn best through connection with other humans. Be sure that you practice being patient, nonjudgmental, helpful and compassionate so that students turn toward your support vs away. This is especially true for students who struggle behaviorally and over time learned to associate adults approaching as "getting in trouble".



Student Choice

Providing students with choice of reinforcement is vital for learning new skills and improving behaviors. Ask students directly, survey their interests and ask their families about preferences.

Visual Menu

Visual menus of reinforcers provide students with an easy way of choosing reinforcers.

Praise It & Describe It

Provide verbal praise along with your reinforcement "Nice! I like how you ____"

Natural Reinforcers

Whenever possible capitalize on natural reinforcers because these are the most powerful; Push the student on the swing each time they attempt to say "push"; Place the playdough on the shelf where the student can see it but needs to ask for "help". You can also gradually shift from contrived reinforcers to natural reinforcers (e.g., giving tokens while doing assignment before free choice to eventually just finishing and getting free choice time is sufficient).

Token Economy

Having students earn tokens throughout tasks and activities that they can later exchange for more meaningful reinforcers is a helpful way of building reinforcement into less preferred demands. This also teaches tolerance to delayed gratification. The trick is to start small then build up. Have student earn 3 tokens before cashing out; then increase to 5 and then 10.

Things to Avoid:

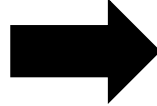
- Not reinforcing student behavior because "students are just expected to do those behaviors". If we are trying to increase a behavior/skill in a student then we must reinforce any attempt they make at using it, no matter if others just do it.
- Not reinforcing student because other kids aren't getting "reinforced". Individualized needs come first (as per the IEP).
- Taking away tokens because students aren't performing or threatening to take away other reinforcers as way to get compliance.
- Not allowing students to frequently "cash-out" their token systems. Allow access to reinforcement as much as needed, especially in the beginning when teaching new skills or targeting replacement behaviors for students struggling behaviorally.

Positive Reinforcement

Student

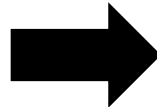
Strategy

Student puts iPad icon on their first-then board as free choice option. Student asks the teacher for the iPad after finishing their assignment.



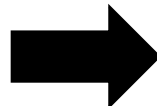
Student Choice & Immediate Reinforcement
Teacher provides (+) the iPad and says "Thank you for using your words!"

Teacher is presenting a lesson about the book the class is reading together. Student raises his hand, waits to be called on and answers a teacher's question correctly.



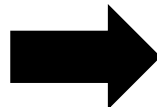
Token Economy & Praise & Describe It
Teacher gives (+) the student two tokens for raising hand and waiting, as well says, "Thanks for raising your hand & waiting to be called on!" with positive affect and tone.

It's time for recess and the student is reaching for the door handle.



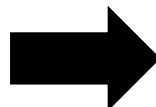
Natural & Immediate Reinforcement
Staff get to their eye level and verbally & gesturally model the sign for "open". Staff waiting expectantly and student says "oo". Staff immediately opens the door.

It's 3rd period math. The teacher has explained the unit and passed out the practice page for students to work on individually. Student is stalling off versus focusing on the math page.



Make Yourself a Reinforcer
Instead of commenting on the lack of focus staff offer the student help. Once student is on track staff says, "Thanks for letting me help."

The student comes in from recess and throws themselves on the ground vs sitting at their table. Everyone else sits in their designated seats and start the activity the teacher is leading. When the staff approaches to prompt with the visual menu of reinforcers, the student yells "Don't talk to me!"



Visual Menu & Make Yourself Reinforcer
Instead of correcting the student, the staff says, "When you're ready I'm here to help". Staff stays in proximity and prompts other students to not comment. A few minutes later the student says, "Fine!". The staff shows the visual menu, the student picks a Frozen song and helps the student get started on the task.

Additional Reminders:

- Be sure to frequently check in on what is reinforcing to the student. Kids, like adults, satiate and need variety.
- Don't be in a hurry to fade reinforcement. Really make sure the student is using the skill/behavior consistently across activities/settings and people before any conversation about fading begins.
- Use the 5:1 to ratio rule; use 5 positive pieces of + feedback (i.e., reinforcement) to every 1 piece of corrective feedback.

Positive Reinforcement

Staff Self-Management

Reflection

Which reinforcers do I mainly use with students?

How effective are my current positive reinforcement practices? _____

What student behaviors am I mainly using reinforcement for? _____

When am I mainly using reinforcement (e.g., time, schedule, transition)? _____

Which two reinforcement strategies am I going to focus on scaling up? _____

Skill Use

Positive Reinforcement strategy #1:

Positive Reinforcement strategy #2:

On a daily basis, check off the box if you practiced using the redirection strategies you are scaling up. Remember, this is *not* evaluatory. This is about focusing on skills that will help you as an educator.

Week #1

Strategy	M	T	W	Th	F
Successes & Barriers:					

Week #2

Strategy	M	T	W	Th	F
Successes & Barriers:					

Week #3

Strategy	M	T	W	Th	F
Successes & Barriers:					

Week #4

Strategy	M	T	W	Th	F
Successes & Barriers:					

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Notes