

Top Tips for Using Behaviour Charts

Set a Behaviour Goal

Make sure your behaviour goal is developmentally appropriate for your child – if your expectations are too high your child won't be able to succeed no matter how hard they try. Make sure your behaviour goal is specific and work on only one at a time – for example: keep hands and feet to yourself or staying in my own bed.

Make a Behaviour Chart

Make a behaviour chart and invite your child to help you decorate it. Let your child choose where to hang the chart.

Decide On a Sticker Schedule

If your behaviour goal is "keep your hands and feet to yourself", the frequency with which you reward positive behaviour will depend on how frequently the problem behaviour is occurring. If your toddler is hitting/biting/pushing/etc. a few times each hour then you will need to reward your child every hour. If the problem behaviour is less frequent, you can offer a sticker reward at the end of each day.

Decide On a Reward Schedule

Initially make non-sticker rewards contingent on a small number of stickers. Your child should be able to earn a non-sticker reward in the first 2-3 days of starting the behaviour chart. Rewards need to be given within 24-hours of your child earning the right number of stickers - delayed rewards reduce the effectiveness of behaviour charts.

Choose Rewards

Rewards are only effective if they're meaningful, so get our child's input about the rewards they'd like to work towards. On a piece of paper list/draw 5-10 rewards that your toddler can choose from. Rewards could include: baking with mum, special time with dad, a special food treat, a play date, time at the park, picking what's for dinner. Make sure you follow through with rewards.

Explain How the Chart Will Work

For example if the chart is for listening, say "see this chart – we're going to use it to help us practice good listening. Good listening means doing what mummy and daddy ask. So if I ask you to pack away your toys and you pack away your toys that would be doing good listening. When you do good listening you'll earn a special sticker and we'll put it on your special chart. If you earn # stickers you'll get to pick a special reward off your special reward list".

Be Consistent

Watch your child's behaviour closely and make sure you reward positive behaviour with a sticker each and every time it occurs.

think TOP TIPS

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Behaviour Charts

When used correctly, behaviour charts can be an extremely effective strategy for modifying a child's behaviour.

The problem is there are so many mixed messages about how to use behaviour charts that many parents find charts ineffective.

There are a number of ways to get it wrong, including:

- Working on too many goals at once
- Using rewards that aren't meaningful
- Being inconsistent with rewards
- Using rewards infrequently
- Using behaviour charts with children younger than 3 years

This tips sheet provides tips for setting up and successfully using a behaviour chart to improve your child's behaviour.

Behaviour charts work on the assumption that a child has the skills they need for positive behaviour and just need help with motivation.

If your child's challenging behaviour continues it may be because their behaviour is the result of lagging skills in the areas of:

- Frustration tolerance
- Emotion regulation skills
- Communication skills
- Flexible thinking

If your child's problem behaviour continues speak to your GP about a referral to a child clinical psychologist.