

Reserving Access to Preferred Items

Understanding Reinforcement

Reinforcement is the act of giving a reward to your child after they have completed an activity which in turn encourages them to want to do that task again in the future (Alberto & Troutman, 2003).

By giving my child a preferred item or activity after they do something 'good' - they will be more likely to do that 'good thing' again!



By incorporating "choice" at home you can increase skill development, structure and motivation to complete tasks at home (e.g. functional life skills).
See "Offering Choice" handout for further information.

Limiting Access and Using Reinforcement at Home

- Ensure the preferred items are kept in a location only you can access
- Offer a "choice" to your child (e.g. Lego or mini sticks) when you ask them what they would like to earn once they have completed the task you want them to do
- Choice can be offered through the use of visual supports (showing the item) or simply asking the question (e.g. "What do you choose?")
- Use a visual support such as a task list, first-then board or a token board to indicate *when* the preferred item/activity will be available (see the *First-Then* handout for further information)
- It is recommended to use a visual timer (The Ol'Kitchen Timer!) to assist in communicating when your child is expected to transition away from their preferred item/activity - a visual timer provides a clear start and finish
- Allow several opportunities to earn their preferred item/activity throughout the day

Benefits of Reserving Rewards



Increased motivation to earn preferred items/activities

Therefore:

- Increased completion of functional skills
- Increased ability to follow instruction/demands
- Increased long term independence

The Ol'Kitchen Timer Trick

Transitioning away from a preferred item or activity can be difficult for your child on the best of days. Try this helpful trick to build successful transitions:

- Adult sets the time, shows the timer to the child and tells them to, "push start"
- Child pushes "start" on the timer
- Child is allowed to play with preferred item or do preferred activity
- Once the time is up, the adult shows the timer to the child and tells them to press "stop"
- Overtime, your child should be able to complete these steps independently

Example Visual Supports

