

Positive Reinforcement



What is it?

Positive reinforcement is the presentation of something pleasant or rewarding immediately following a behavior AND increases the likelihood of that behavior occurring again.

Why use positive reinforcement?

- It WORKS! Use with any STUDENT, any AGE!
- It's EASY
- Crucial to learning new behaviors (shape skill)
- WE ALL need it (why do *you* work??)
- It is NOT "bribery" (we are not reinforcing negative behavior)
- Builds self-esteem and confidence

Types of positive reinforcement

- Verbal praise
- Social (smile, thumbs up)
- Privileges (class helper, computer time, free time)
- Tangibles (candy, prize)
- Secondary (trade in later)

Tips

- Find out what student likes and offer choice.
 - Ask students what they like! (If they don't want it, they aren't going to work for it). Can also ask parents or others familiar with the student. May do a "reinforcement survey".
 - Offer a variety
 - Change reinforcers periodically (interests change and don't want them to get "bored")
 - Have a "reinforcer menu" (list of items they can work for and how earn it)

- Should be IMMEDIATE (if performed behavior in morning and doesn't get reward until after school, child may not get connection)
- Control access to reinforcers
 - Limit or eliminate access to chosen reinforcer at other times of day/other environments (i.e. if can get pretzels anytime at home, not as likely to want to work for them)
- When using verbal praise, label the behavior not the student
- Consistency is important
- May pair rewards
 - I.e. always pair verbal reinforcement with tangible, then can fade tangible
 - May give a child a "token" (sticker, points, coupon, etc.) that can be traded later so they are given something immediately
- When students are frustrated or having a difficult time, you INCREASE the rate of reinforcement
- Reinforce OFTEN in beginning (when introducing new concept or trying to teach a new behavior) then FADE (reduce how often)