Behavior Reinforcement & Consequence Menus for Parents

How to Use These Menus

These menus are designed to help parents create consistent reinforcement systems, routines, and behavior expectations that are developmentally appropriate. Rewards and consequences work best when they are:

- Immediate and predictable
- Consistent across caregivers
- Clearly explained ahead of time
- Reasonable and proportional
- Focused on teaching rather than punishment
- Paired with praise, coaching, and emotional support

Helpful Guidelines

- Daily rewards work best for younger children because they need more immediate reinforcement.
- Older children and teens can usually work toward weekly rewards or privileges.
- Try to focus on one to three target behaviors at a time.
- Praise specific behaviors ("Great job cleaning up when asked the first time.")
- Avoid removing major emotional supports (comfort items, meals, affection, birthdays, etc.) as consequences.
- Whenever possible, connect consequences logically to the behavior.

Toddlers & Preschoolers (Approx. Ages 2–5)

Best Reinforcement Style

- Immediate rewards
- Visual charts/stickers
- Short timeframes (same day)
- Frequent praise and encouragement

Daily Reward Menu

- Sticker or stamp
- Extra bedtime story
- Five to 10 extra minutes of playtime
- Choosing a snack
- Choosing pajamas

- Choosing a song in the car
- Dance party
- Bubbles outside
- Sidewalk chalk time
- Picking the family movie
- Small prize from treasure box
- Extra cuddles or special parent time
- Staying up 10–15 minutes later
- Choosing dinner side dish
- Playground trip
- Ice cream or small treat
- Helping with a “grown-up” job
- Extra bath toys
- Water play activity

Weekly Reward Menu

- Trip to the park
- Library visit
- Mini toy or dollar-store item
- Baking together
- Picnic outing
- Playdate
- Sleepover with grandparent/cousin
- Trip for frozen yogurt
- New coloring/activity book
- Choice of weekend activity
- Special breakfast outing
- Build-a-fort night
- Family game night choice

Developmentally Appropriate Consequence Menu

- Brief timeout or calm-down break

- Loss of one toy/activity for a short period
- Redirection to a different activity
- Parent-assisted cleanup
- Natural consequences (“If toys are thrown, toys are put away for now.”)
- Practice/re-do (“Try asking again with a calm voice.”)
- Ending activity early
- Sitting next to caregiver for support/reset
- Reduced screen time for the day
- Repairing behavior (helping clean, apologizing, checking on peer)

Behaviors Often Appropriate for Reinforcement at This Age

- Using words instead of hitting
- Following one-step directions
- Potty use
- Cleaning up toys
- Gentle hands
- Transitioning without major tantrums
- Trying new foods
- Sleeping in own bed
- Sharing
- Waiting briefly/being patient

Early Elementary School Age (Approx. Ages 6–8)

Best Reinforcement Style

- Daily or every-other-day reinforcement
- Visual behavior charts
- Simple point/token systems
- Clear expectations and routines

Daily Reward Menu

- Extra screen time (10–30 minutes)
- Choosing dessert

- Staying up slightly later
- Choosing family game
- One-on-one parent time
- Small toy/trinket
- Extra outside time
- Video game time
- Picking music in the car
- Choice of dinner
- Special craft/activity
- Extra reading time together
- Earning points/tokens toward larger reward
- Invite friend over
- Bike/scooter ride
- Choose after-school activity
- Hot chocolate/popcorn night

Weekly Reward Menu

- Movie night
- Sleepover/playdate
- Trip to favorite store
- New book or small item
- Earning allowance bonus
- Bowling/arcade outing
- Mini golf
- Trampoline park
- Choosing weekend activity
- Extra gaming time on weekend
- Family outing of choice
- Baking/cooking activity
- Special breakfast or lunch outing
- Craft kit or LEGO set

Developmentally Appropriate Consequence Menu

- Loss of privilege tied to behavior
- Reduced screen time
- Earlier bedtime
- Extra chore/helping task
- Reflection sheet/drawing about behavior
- Repair conversation/apology
- Temporary separation from activity/group
- Natural/logical consequences
- Re-doing task correctly
- Earning privilege back through positive behavior
- Calm-down break before discussion
- Parent supervision increased temporarily

Behaviors Often Appropriate for Reinforcement at This Age

- Completing homework
- Following routines independently
- Morning readiness
- Respectful communication
- Emotional regulation
- Completing chores
- Positive sibling interactions
- Listening first time
- Honesty
- Good sportsmanship
- Using coping skills
- Independent hygiene tasks

Later Elementary & Pre-Teen (Approx. Ages 9–12)

Best Reinforcement Style

- Point systems

- Goal tracking
- Combination of daily and weekly rewards
- Increased responsibility and delayed gratification

Daily Reward Menu

- Extra screen or gaming time
- Choosing family activity
- Later bedtime on weekend
- Earning money/allowance points
- Choosing dinner or takeout
- Extra friend time
- Access to preferred app/game
- Special snack/drink
- Music privileges
- Independent choice time
- Bonus leisure time after homework
- Earning toward larger purchase

Weekly Reward Menu

- Mall/store outing
- Sleepover
- Movie theater
- Additional allowance
- New game/book/accessory
- Trip with friend
- Escape room/trampoline park
- Choice of weekend plans
- Spa/self-care night
- Extra electronics privileges
- Special outing with parent
- Saving toward bigger item
- Room makeover item/decor

Developmentally Appropriate Consequence Menu

- Temporary loss of electronics
- Reduced social privileges
- Earlier curfew/bedtime
- Increased responsibilities/chore completion
- Restitution or repair of damage
- Written reflection/problem-solving discussion
- Delayed access to preferred activity
- Earning privileges back gradually
- Loss of independence temporarily
- Natural/logical consequences
- Parent check-ins or supervision increase
- Temporary pause from social plans if related to behavior

Behaviors Often Appropriate for Reinforcement at This Age

- Completing homework without reminders
- Managing frustration appropriately
- Respectful communication
- Completing chores consistently
- Accountability/honesty
- Using coping skills independently
- Positive peer interactions
- Time management
- Helping family members
- Responsible technology use
- Self-advocacy
- Flexible thinking

Teenagers (Approx. Ages 13–18)

Best Reinforcement Style

- Collaborative goal setting

- Weekly incentives
- Increased autonomy
- Privilege-based systems
- Natural consequences whenever possible

Daily Reward Menu

- Additional phone or gaming time
- Flexible curfew
- Access to car privileges
- Choosing dinner/order out
- Independent time with friends
- Coffee/snack outing
- Music/TV privileges
- Relaxed chore expectations for the evening
- Earning money toward desired item
- Choice of family plans
- Increased privacy/autonomy privileges

Weekly Reward Menu

- Later curfew on weekend
- Shopping budget
- Special outing/activity
- Sleepover or extra social plans
- Additional driving privileges
- Increased allowance
- Concert/event/activity contribution
- Day trip with friends
- New clothing item
- Larger electronics or hobby purchase contribution
- Gym/activity membership perk
- Choice of weekend schedule

Developmentally Appropriate Consequence Menu

- Temporary loss of phone/electronics
- Reduced driving privileges
- Earlier curfew
- Loss of social privileges tied to behavior
- Increased accountability/check-ins
- Restitution for damages or poor decisions
- Additional household responsibilities
- Temporary pause from extracurricular/social activities
- Collaborative problem-solving discussion
- Natural/logical consequences whenever safe and appropriate
- Requirement to rebuild trust through consistency
- Temporary limits on independence

Behaviors Often Appropriate for Reinforcement at This Age

- School attendance and effort
- Responsible technology use
- Communication with caregivers
- Completing responsibilities independently
- Emotional regulation during conflict
- Safe decision-making
- Time management
- Respectful behavior
- Following household expectations
- Honesty and accountability
- Job or extracurricular responsibility
- Independent coping/problem solving

Sample Reinforcement Schedule Ideas

Sticker Chart (Toddlers/Young Children)

- Earn one sticker each time target behavior occurs
- Five stickers = small reward
- 20 stickers = larger weekly reward

Token Economy (Elementary Age)

- Earn tokens/points throughout the day
- Tokens exchanged for rewards
- Higher-value rewards require saving points

Daily Check-In System (Pre-Teens)

- Morning expectations reviewed
- Points earned across categories (school, chores, attitude, routines)
- Daily privileges tied to points earned
- Weekly bonus reward for consistency

Privilege Ladder (Teens)

- Core privileges earned through responsibility
- Increased independence tied to trust and consistency
- Loss of privilege is temporary and connected to behavior
- Teen involved in creating expectations and goals

Parent Tips for Success

Reinforcement Works Best When:

- Expectations are specific
- Rewards are realistic and sustainable
- Parents follow through consistently
- Positive attention happens more often than correction
- Children know exactly how to earn rewards
- Systems are adjusted as the child matures

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Giving very large rewards too often
- Threatening consequences that cannot realistically be enforced
- Delaying consequences too long
- Using shame, humiliation, or lengthy lectures
- Focusing only on negative behaviors
- Changing rules frequently
- Expecting perfection immediately

Helpful Reminder

The goal of behavior systems is not simply compliance — it is helping children build regulation, responsibility, confidence, communication, and long-term coping skills.