

How To: Choosing Reinforcers

What does it look like?

- Reinforcers are the things that people want or need and will perform a task to get them. Ex. Turn on the lights to get out of the dark or call someone's name to get their attention.
 - Reinforcers can be tangibles (ex. Preferred objects, toys), social (ex. attention, smiles, praise, thumbs up), and activity based (ex. games, playing outdoors)

How?

1. Make a list of things that your child wants.
2. You can use photos, pictures, drawings, objects, or written words for the steps in this process
 - a. Get input from your child when making the list. Keep this list and make notes on it. Wants may change over time or throughout the week. You can add and remove items.
3. Choose items that are available. Your child may want something that you don't have or isn't available. Use consistent language (ex. That is not available right now, these are your choices)
4. Remove items that an individual likes but won't meet the expectation to gain. (ex. Likes toy trucks, but won't complete assignments when it is offered as the reinforcer)
5. If the child identifies something on the list that you know you are not able to withhold then do not make it a reinforcer
 - a. Ex. If you know that you need screen time so that you can hold daily work meetings, then it may not make the best reinforcer because they quickly learn they can get it "for free" later.
6. If they will "only work for screen time" and you also need it for other things, then get creative.
 - a. Ex. If there is a tablet and a tv in the house, but you need something to keep them busy while you work, you may offer the tv for times that you are working, and the tablet is only available when they've completed "X" expectation. Or, the child could have access to the tv while you work, but their favorite tv show is only available after completion of "X" expectation.
7. If you are not sure what you can use as a reinforcer, consider everything that your child does in a day. What does your child do when they are not eating, sleeping, or engaging in hygiene? Consider those as potential reinforcers
 - a. Ex. reading a book, talking with friends, daydreaming, listening to music, doodling, sitting alone, playing with a pet, getting attention from others
8. Make sure that you offer reinforcers that are available consistently. It is not a good idea to have multiple children working for access to a tablet if there is only 1 tablet available or if you also use the tablet for work. Working for a restaurant gift card may not be a good idea unless you have the means to purchase and travel.
9. Rank the wants from most desirable to least desirable from the child's perspective.
10. Now that you've chosen your reinforcers see "How to use reinforcers."