

Promoting Learning and Positive Behaviour at Home

Behaviour Contracts for Children and Young People with Additional Needs

Resource 4



This resource is part of a series of seven booklets on Promoting Learning and Positive Behaviour in the Home developed by the NCSE Behaviour Practitioner team. The series is for parents of children and young people with additional needs.

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Booklets in the series

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Resource 3: Using Reward Systems for Children and Young People with Additional Needs

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What is a Behaviour Contract?

A behaviour contract is a written agreement between a child or young person and a parent. It spells out what rules the child or young person needs to follow and therefore what behaviour is expected from him or her. It outlines behaviour that is acceptable and unacceptable as well as the consequences and rewards involved. Schools sometimes develop behaviour contracts between students, parents and teachers to improve behaviour.

When developing behaviour contracts, children and young people select and negotiate rules and rewards. The strategy therefore, will be effective with children and young people who can understand these concepts. Typically, behaviour contracts are designed to work on increasing positive behaviours such as socially interacting with people, listening to others, doing homework or helping out at home.

When writing a contract, it is important to have your child involved from the beginning. This enables your child to plan and talk to you about the contract as you are writing it. Your child therefore sees the contract as fair. Involving your child from the beginning also fosters open communication and choice making between both of you. This sense of empowerment will support your child to feel better about him or herself. It will also promote independence and accountable for his or her own behaviour.



To help your child to adhere to the contract, it is important that the rules set out in the contract are clear, achievable and your child fully understands them. The rewards identified by your child and you should motivate your child to work hard on the behaviour(s) listed.

Behaviour contracts are a useful and powerful strategy to support positive behaviours at home.

Some examples of written and visual support of behaviour contracts:-

Sample: Written Behaviour Contract

JOBS TO DO AT HOME

Today is: _____ My rules are:

My favourite things are: _____

Jobs that must be done are:

- ✓ Hoovering
- ✓ Dishes
- ✓ Tidy Bedroom
- ✓ Laundry

1. Complete 2 jobs every day.
2. Jobs must be done properly.
3. I can choose the jobs myself.

What happens when I don't follow my rules?:
I don't get _____

What happens when I follow my rules? I get:

Signed (Parent) _____ Signed (Child) _____

Sample: Behaviour Contract with Visual Supports

	<p style="color: #27ae60; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">I CAN</p> <p style="color: #e74c3c; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">STOP and THINK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use kind words • Ask for a break to a safe place 	<p>I will earn my reward at the end of the day if I can follow my rules.</p>
<p style="font-weight: bold; color: #27ae60;">When I feel upset and annoyed</p> 	<p style="color: #e74c3c; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">I CAN NOT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run to a safe area • Climb on furniture or anything that is not meant for climbing 	<p>I will not earn my reward if I do not follow my rules.</p>

Steps for developing Behaviour Contracts

1. Print a behaviour contract template - see useful websites - or your child and you can design one on a white board or copybook.
2. Sit down with your child.
3. Agree on what your child will do - the rule or rules in the contract.
4. Agree on what reward your child will get for following the rule(s).
5. Agree on what support your child will need to follow the rules. Who will provide this support and how often?
6. Agrees on what consequences should be included for not following the rules.
7. Write the contract in positive language, state what you would like your child to do, not what you do not want them to do. E.g. the rule should be "I will do my jobs around the house" rather than "I will stop being lazy around the house".
8. Establish at the beginning the threshold for getting a reward. Will you give the reward if your child does only one job, half completes the jobs or decides to do more jobs?
9. If your child does not follow the rules, the consequence should involve not getting the promised reward.
10. Everyone involved in drawing up the contract must sign the contract. Signing the contract (written or visual) emphasises its importance.

Remember the point of developing a behaviour contract with your child is to motivate him or her to engage in behaviour that you want to see more of and to increase accountability. Sitting down and planning the agreement with your child will include him or her in decisions relating to his/her life. This process teaches important negotiation skills that will support your child with relationship building throughout his or her life.



Top Tips!

- Your child can make his or her own behaviour contract template by writing or drawing it out.
- Check that your child clearly understands the words in the contract and what they mean.
- Make sure your child is motivated to follow the contract by identifying rewards that they like, not what you think they might like. Refer to the booklet on Reward Systems for Children and Young People with Additional Needs.
- Revise the steps if the contract is not working.
- If the behaviour contract strategy is working well, add additional rules and/or rewards.
- Balance effort with reward.
- The rules in the contracts should be within the ability level of your child to follow.

Helpful links:

- www.twinkl.ie

Reference:

- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/working-with-childs-teacher/behavior-contracts-what-you-need-to-know>
- <https://strategiesforspecialinterventions.weebly.com/behavior-contracts.html>



