

## BEHAVIORAL CONTRACTS

A behavioral contract may be the next step if the student becomes accustomed and responds well to a token economy intervention. A behavioral contract is an agreement between the student, teacher, and sometimes, the parents. The contract delineates the behaviors or tasks a student is to perform, the criteria for an acceptable level of performance or completion, the reinforcement (i.e., activities, privileges, or tangible items he will receive in exchange), and any quantifiers of the rewards. A system of record keeping must be developed to document the student's progress toward fulfilling the contract.

Typically, children are less frequently reinforced in a contract system than in a token economy system; consequently, the time interval between demonstration of (or refraining from) the target behavior and reinforcement is longer. Contracts may not be sufficiently motivating to allow younger students and students with a moderate or more severe level of ADHD to sustain behavioral improvements. Delay between behavior and reinforcement must be attuned to the child's maturational level. Children under 6 years of age are unlikely to benefit from behavioral contracts as they are frequently unable to delay gratification or understand the contract rules (e.g., that they do not receive a "reward" after just one demonstration of a particular behavior).

Initially, as with any behavioral intervention, the behavioral criteria for earning rewards must be well within the ability of the student and reinforcers must be highly motivating to the individual child as well as appropriate to his/her developmental level. As the student demonstrates consistent success with one level of behavioral criteria, the criteria for earning rewards, the period of time between rewards, or the delay between behavior and rewards, can be gradually increased. To sustain interest in the program, reinforcers may need to be reviewed and changed frequently.

In the initial stages of establishing a behavioral contract, including the following elements in the contract will ensure failure: targeting too many behaviors at one time, targeting multiple-step tasks, and setting excessively high criteria. The child must experience success, strictly within the boundaries of the contract, from the start.

*Adapted from:*

DuPaul, G.J. & Stoner, G. (1994). *ADHD in the schools: Assessment and intervention strategies*. New York: Guilford Press.

## SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL CONTRACT

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_ (student) will complete his homework each night and come to class ready and able to participate in assignments and activities based on the homework.

### *Student and Teacher Responsibilities*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (student), agree to:

1. write down my assignments in my assignment book at the end of each day and ask the teacher to initial them. If no homework is assigned for a specific subject, I will write "NH" in the box. Criteria: At least 75% of the assignments for the week.
2. bring home the books and materials necessary to do my homework each day. Criteria: At least 75% of assignments for the week.
3. put my homework in the homework box each morning.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (teacher), agree to:

1. write the assignments on the board at the end of each day and remind \_\_\_\_\_ to write them in his book;
2. remind \_\_\_\_\_ to put materials in his backpack, helping \_\_\_\_\_ to check each assignment on the board as he does so;
3. remind \_\_\_\_\_ to hand in his homework when he enters class each morning.

### *School-based Rewards*

Each day that \_\_\_\_\_ hands in his homework in the morning, has his assignments written down from the day before, and has brought home the correct materials for the previous day's homework, he will be allowed to choose one of the following:

1. spend 15 minutes before lunch using a computer program of his choice;
2. leave 5 minutes early for lunch;
3. treat the whole class to popcorn at snack time. (Ms. Smith will make it.)

### *Parent Responsibilities*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (parent), agree to:

1. remind \_\_\_\_\_ to do his homework before or immediately after dinner;
2. review \_\_\_\_\_'s assignment book with him to make sure he understands the tasks assigned;
3. provide quiet during homework time;
4. be available for help as needed.

**Home-based Rewards**

If \_\_\_\_\_ meets his obligations for the entire week, he may choose to:

- have a friend stay overnight at his house;
- have pizza for dinner and rent a movie on Friday or Saturday night; or
- have his mom/dad take him to a movie, skating, bowling, or other special activity.

I agree to carry out my responsibilities as stated above.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_                                  \_\_\_\_\_                                  \_\_\_\_\_  
 Student                                  Teacher                                  Parent

**Documentation Form for Behavioral Contract**

Name	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Write assignments	Y N N/A	Y N N/A	Y N N/A	Y N N/A	Y N N/A
Bring home materials	Y N N/A	Y N N/A	Y N N/A	Y N N/A	Y N N/A
Hand in homework	Y N N/A	Y N N/A	Y N N/A	Y N N/A	Y N N/A