

Token and Point-Based Economies

What is a token or point economy?

- ▶ A token economy is something you can use where the child earns a tokens, points, or other markers and can exchange them for a highly preferred item or activity.
- ▶ Here is a video explaining token economies in more detail. While she focuses on the use of a token economy with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, keep in mind anyone can benefit from using a token economy, and they may be done slightly differently for each child.
- ▶ [Token Economy Video](#)



You or your child have probably used one before...

- ▶ Have you ever used a sticker or star chart to motivate your child to finish homework? If so, you've used a token economy!!
- ▶ Has your child ever had any type of star chart or points system in their class? A marble jar to earn a pizza party? If so, they have used a token economy!
- ▶ Token economies are very popular, especially in classrooms, can be customized easily, and are user friendly!



Effectiveness of Token Economies

- ▶ Token economies are used in many different settings and can be used for many different behaviors.
- ▶ Token economies are effective because they help to both establish behavior as well as maintain it over long periods of time (Hackenberg, 2009).
 - ▶ This means that whether you want your child to do a newer behavior more often or continue doing a behavior they already do, using some type of token economy can help!
- ▶ Token economies are very easy to implement. They can be as simple or as complicated as you'd like, giving flexibility to make it a quick and easy intervention if needed. This makes it easy to use consistently and is pretty quick to set up!

Let's
practice!



What can token economies be used for?

- ▶ In short, almost anything!
- ▶ They are commonly used to target behaviors you'd like to see an increase in: doing schoolwork, reading, having a calm body or voice, turning in assignments, etc.
- ▶ Token economies give you a great chance to catch your child doing something good and recognize them for it!



I want to use a token economy... where should I start?

Step 1: Target Behaviors

The very first thing you need to do is to choose which behavior(s) you want to work on. These are called your “target behaviors”. Starting small with one or two behaviors may be a good idea while you can your child get familiar with this.

1. Make sure to set your child up for success! You can start small! You can always adjust things later if you need to.

2. Make sure to focus on positive behaviors. Instead of giving a token for “not getting frustrated”, give a token for “staying calm”!

Be positive

Step 2: Choose Your Format

Next, you need to decide on the format you will use. It is a good idea to include your child in this process to make sure they like the format of what they will be using.

1. Have fun! There are so many options to choose from. Some common forms are laminated boxes with velcro to stick the tokens on, a piece of paper to put stickers on, a whiteboard with points or tokens drawn on, a marble jar, a cup of coins, a sticky note with tally marks, and so many more.

2. Customize it based on your child's interests and age.

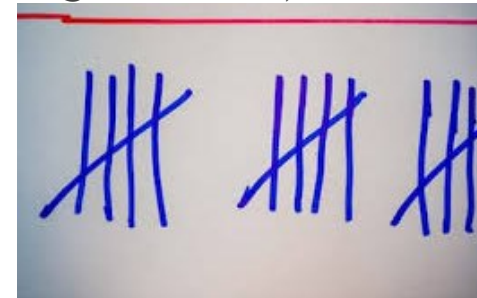


3. Decide what the “tokens” will be called. Tokens, points, stickers, marbles, money, stars, smileys, etc...

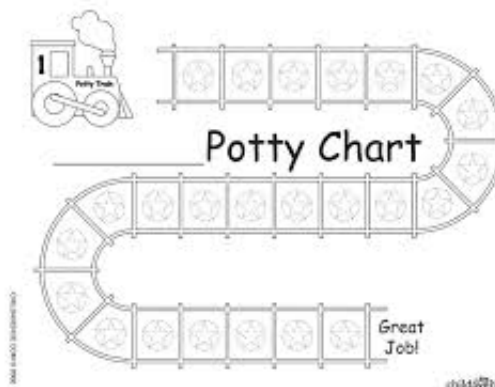
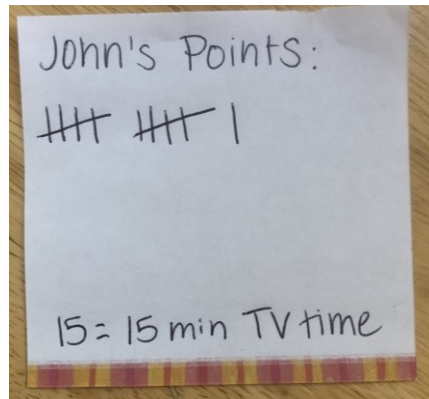
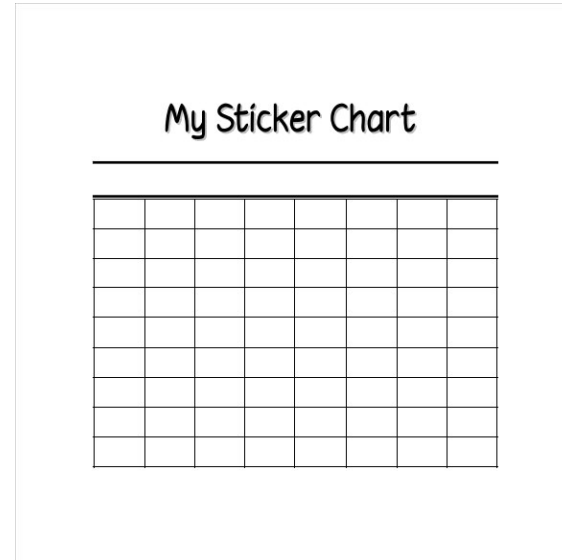
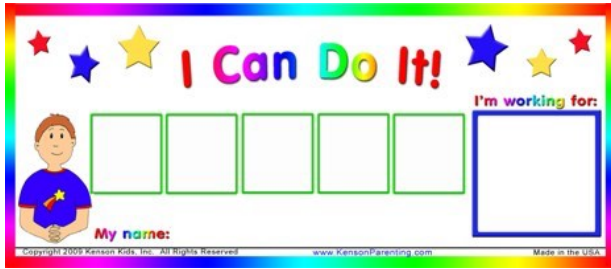
Using Things You Already Have

Here are some things you might already have that you can use:

1. Cookie sheet or whiteboard and a whiteboard marker
2. Stainless steel refrigerator and a whiteboard marker
3. A cup and a few coins, marbles, game pieces, dry beans, dry pasta, or anything else small enough to fit in the cup
4. Concrete and sidewalk chalk (if the weather is good and you can go outside)
5. A blank notes page on your phone and some fun emojis
6. Paper and markers, pen, crayon, bingo markers, or pencil
7. A cookie sheet or refrigerator and magnets
8. Paper and stickers or stamps



More Examples of Different Token Economies



Step 3: Set Your Criteria

- ▶ The next thing to do is decide how many tokens or points your child will need to earn in order to get their reward. Will they need 5 points? 10 stars? 20 marbles?
- ▶ Things to keep in mind while selecting criteria:
 - ▶ How often does/will the behavior happen? If it does not happen often, think about starting smaller. If it happens often, you might be able to start with a higher expectation.
 - ▶ Is this something new for your child or is it something they already do? Make sure your child can be successful, but it is still an improvement in their behavior. You can always increase your expectations after your child shows success.
 - ▶ Decide what they will need to finish to earn a token and then their main reward! Think: problems, sentences, pages, assignments, etc. This makes it easy to give you child clear expectations.



Step 4: Reward Options

The next thing to do is to decide what your child can earn. By now you should have established HOW they will earn it and WHEN they will earn it.

1. VERY IMPORTANT: Rewards MUST be things your child likes. This is how you will get buy-in from your child and ultimately where their motivation will come from.

- Think about treats they like: ice cream, candy, extra screen time, extra play time, etc.

2. Make sure your child can easily earn what they're working for, but don't make it TOO easy. If it's too hard, earning the reward might not be worth it for your child. If it's too easy, your child might only work for something a few times before they get bored of it.

**WORTH IT -OR-
NOT WORTH IT**

More Reward Considerations

- ▶ Make sure your child is excited about what they're working for and feel free to change it up if needed.
- ▶ Don't let your child have what they're working for until they earn it. If they get it without earning it, they will not have motivation to do what you're asking of them.
- ▶ Follow through! This goes both ways. If your child does their part and earns their tokens or points, do your part and give them access to their reward. If they don't do their part, don't give them what they were working for.
- ▶ If your child decides to change the reward they were working for when they have earned it, allow this, as long as it is acceptable (hey, we all change our minds!)

Step 5: Gather materials and make sure you have all pieces ready

- ▶ For whichever format you have chosen to use, gather all necessary materials and do any assembly required.
- ▶ You should have everything ready to go before you start running your token economy so that it will run smoothly
- ▶ Things to consider:
 - ▶ If you are using something other than a mark on a whiteboard or paper, make sure you have extra “tokens” readily available. They tend to get lost easily!
 - ▶ If you are using velcro or stickers, make sure they actually stick to the surface you will be putting them on
 - ▶ Have pictures of anything you need printed ready to go



Time to Use Your New Token Economy!

- ▶ 1. Let your child know you will be starting the token economy.



Ok Billy,
you're going
to be earning
stickers
today!



Ok!

- ▶ 2. Ask your child what they want to work for. This can be open ended or closed ended depending on the child, their interests, and their age.

Would you like a cookie, bubbles, or 5 minutes of video time for earning your stickers?

OR

What would you like to work for for earning your stickers?



I want to work for a cookie!



- ▶ 3. Explain your criteria so they know how to earn both individual tokens and their reward.

Awesome, you can work for a cookie! Every time you finish 2 math problems, you get 1 sticker. After you get 5 stickers, you get your cookie.



Yay! I want chocolate chip...



- ▶ 4. Reinforce with tokens or points.



Nice job getting 2
problems done!
Here's a sticker!
Which sticker do
you want?

I want a star
sticker!



*put star sticker on
the paper*

- ▶ 5. After all tokens have been earned, give the reward!

You got all of your stickers! YAY, great job Billy!! Here's your cookie!



Yum!



Notice Your Child's Success

- ▶ Giving your child what they earned will make it more likely they'll continue to be successful!
- ▶ As soon as you notice your child does the behavior you are asking for, let them you know you notice it! Make an effort to catch them being good! Give them social praise along with their token and/or reward.
 - ▶ Example: “Awesome job doing those problems Billy! Here’s your sticker!”
- ▶ Overall, make sure your child knows they are doing well when you see them doing well! Tell them specifically what they did well and make it exciting.



Other Tips and Frequently Asked Questions

- ▶ Remember that it can be as simple or complicated as you want it to be. Anything that works for you and your child will be fine.
- ▶ My child is having a difficult time earning tokens. What should I do?
 - ▶ It's ok if your child is not immediately successful in earning tokens or rewards. If it continues though, consider making your expectations a little easier. Also make sure you are asking them again what they'd like to work for. Sometimes their reward might not be motivating enough, so checking often may help.
- ▶ My child is earning tokens too easily! What should I do?
 - ▶ You can change your expectations based on success. If your child is doing well and you'd like to make it harder, you can!
- ▶ I need more help with challenging behaviors, not behaviors I want to see an increase in. Can I use a token economy for this?
 - ▶ You can definitely choose target behaviors you'd like to see a decrease in. However, rather than choosing to focus on, for example, "not screaming", the focus should be on having a "quiet voice". Remember to set positive expectations.
- ▶ Only use each token economy for one thing. If you want to work on homework completion and having a calm voice (not crying) during work, use two separate token economies so you can truly work on each skill.

Token Economy Resources

- ▶ There are many fun and free printable charts online that can be printed and used or just used for inspiration. A quick search for “token chart”, “star chart”, or whatever specific version you are looking for will bring up many options.
- ▶ The smartphone/tablet app “StickerPOP! Sticker Charts” is a free app that can be downloaded on a phone or tablet and used as a sticker chart.
- ▶ Buckeye Union School District has free resources available on their website as well. To access these, click [here](#) or go to www.buckeyeusd.org and click the drop down menu for “District Services”. Then, click “Mental Health & Behavioral Resources”. Under the heading on the page, click the black link that says “CLICK HERE”. On the Student Services Resources page, go to the top right corner and click “Home” then “Behavior Support”. There you will see multiple behavior chart options as well as other behavior resources.
- ▶ PBIS World also has free resources and ideas. You will find these [here](#) or at www.pbisworld.com under the “Tier 2” tab by clicking on “Reward System”.