



## Token Economy

A Token Economy is a system of individual reinforcement of target behaviors in which tokens are given in exchange for wanted behavior. The tokens are then used to purchase desired privileges. Tokens commonly used include stickers, plastic poker chips, quarters, metal chips, beans, happy faces, or play money.

The system includes **three** different lists, they include:

1. The **desired behaviors** and the **number of tokens** awarded for these behaviors.
2. The **behaviors that are not wanted** and the cost when these behaviors are observed
3. The **privileges** and how much they cost to enjoy that activity.

### Building the Token Economy

1. Select what token you will use.
2. Prepare the first list and token rewards for when the selected behavior is observed. (An example below)

DESIRED BEHAVIORS	TOKENS
No marks from school today	3 tokens
Playing with sibling well	5 tokens
Having a clean plate at dinner	1 token
Going to bed easy	5 tokens

3. Prepare the second list and token costs for these behaviors. (An example below)

NON-DESIRED BEHAVIORS	TOKENS
Arguing with parents	3 tokens
Talking back	1 tokens
Lying	5 token
Fighting with neighbor kids	2 tokens

4. Prepare the third list, the price of enjoying a privilege. (An example below)

COST OF PRIVILEGES	TOKENS
15 minutes of TV	1 tokens
15 minutes of Video Games	1 tokens
Staying up 15 minutes late one night	2 token
Rent movie	4 tokens



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## 5. Begin using your economy.

There are several rules that you should think through before you begin using the token economy. First of all for the children to be successful with a token economy, they need to be successful at first. So when you make your lists at first make sure that your child will have lots of tokens. You may change the lists every week, and the only reason to do it sooner is that the child has not been able to keep any tokens for any privileges. So as the child becomes more successful with some behaviors you can decrease the worth and increase the worth for behaviors that need to be worked on more, each week then the economy is changed to meet the needs of the family.

Remember the rights and privileges must be clearly defined. If it is a privilege in your home, then it will have to have a value, even if it is quite small. Define the rights clearly; food, clothes and a place to sleep; these may be the only rights and everything else may be a privilege in your home, you will have to decide.

Some families might choose to give the child a few tokens every morning, especially if there are not lots of desired behaviors that you are hoping to enhance. The child will not be able to be successful if they do not have enough tokens to purchase some privileges.

If there are siblings you may choose to use a token economy for all the children. There should be ways that they can earn tokens together as well as privileges they can share the cost. You may have to include privileges and behaviors that may only pertain to only one of the children, that is okay. The system will still work fine.

### **Final comments**

No behavior plan works for long periods of time without changing it. Every week there needs to be some new rules, new behaviors that are desired and new behaviors that are not desired. The value of privileges might also change. It is fair to add certain “special privileges” that might have a high value to give the child something specific to work towards. This is a good way of rekindling interest in a system that might be losing its presence.

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