

DEVELOPING A POINT SYSTEM



Why Use A Point System?

***To strengthen prosocial behaviors in addition to decreasing problem behaviors.**

***To emphasize what children do well.**

***To promote fairness and consistency.**

***To help children learn that their behavior makes a difference.**

***To structure children's daily routines.**

***To set occasions for catching children being good.**

In most cases, point systems are appropriate for children 8 years old and older.

Steps to Using a Point System

1. Parents should pinpoint what they want their children to do. They should then consult with their children. Finally, parents should make a list of desirable behaviors, and how often parents want them to occur.

2. Parents should examine how reasonable their expectations are.

3. Parents should pinpoint a few negative behaviors. They should then consult with their children and list out undesirable behaviors. Next, parents should specify how much they expect each problem behavior to decrease.

4. Parents should make a list of some of their children's favorite items, events, and activities. Parents should then put a value on items that they can control their children's access to. They should select events or items that can be given to their children as rewards on a daily basis with minimal effort.

5. Parents should explain the detailed definitions of each desirable and undesirable behavior. Parents should record these definitions on a sheet of paper and keep them for their own reference.

6. Parents should list desirable and undesirable behaviors and their children's privileges on a weekly record sheet.

7. Parents should now make decisions about points given for desirable behaviors. The highest values should be given to the behaviors parents and their children consider the most important and that occur the least. It is a good idea to assign higher values to desirable behaviors to "stack the deck" in the children's favor.

8. Next, parents should assign point values to undesirable behaviors. These points will be subtracted when an undesirable behavior occurs. The values subtracted for undesirable behaviors should be lower than the values added for good behavior. Low values should be placed on undesirable behaviors. Parents should assign higher values to behaviors of most potential harm to children and/or others, for example, aggression. Parents should assign relatively low values to minor, non-dangerous behaviors, such as verbal abuse or disruption. Parents should assign low values to behaviors that occur frequently to decrease the chance of children losing more points than they earn on a daily basis.

9. Parents should assign points to their children's preferred activities so that children are able to exchange points daily for one or more privileges. For example, a privilege should not cost seven points when desirable behaviors can only be earned in increments of five. When in doubt, parents should assign low values for privileges.

10. Parents should allow their children to exchange all points earned on a daily basis.

11. During daily accounting sessions, which should be scheduled in advance, parents should describe their children's performance, award points, and specify times for exchanges. At all other times, parents should not discuss these issues. This will minimize children's opportunities to gain reinforcement through manipulative behaviors.

12. Parents should try to discourage their children from saving earned points from day to day.

13. Parents should arrange daily bonus opportunities if the number of points children earn indicates that they are behaving better than the predetermined expected level. Later, when children have reached a point where they are consistently

behaving better than parents originally expected, parents can either increase the frequency of the desirable behaviors necessary to gain points (and likewise decrease the frequency of undesirable behaviors necessary to gain points), or space out the bonus opportunities (e.g., on a weekly or monthly basis).

14. Parents should frequently review their children's performance. When a desirable behavior is being performed at or above the level expected, parents can gradually decrease the value of that behavior and/or start reinforcing their children's behavior only every other time it occurs. Eventually, parents should substitute a new desirable behavior for one that is routinely performed. When the frequency of a problem behavior is at or below the level expected, parents can maintain the conditions for that behavior and establish conditions for another problem behavior.

15. Parents should review the frequency at which earned points are exchanged for specific privileges. If one privilege is seldom selected, parents should talk to their children about this and replace it with another privilege.

16. If children's performance does not approach parents' expected level, parents should check these things out:

- *The consistency and accuracy of parental monitoring.

- *Parental control over access to privileges.

- *The pattern of behaviors exhibited by children.

- *The frequency and conditions of exchanges of points for privileges.

- *Both parents' and their children's selection of privileges.

How to Give and Take Away Points

Both giving and taking away points should be as pleasant as possible. There are several things that parents and children should do whenever there is a point exchange.

Rules for Parents When Giving Points

- *Parents should be near their children and able to touch them (not twenty feet or two rooms away).

- *Parents should look at their children and smile.

*Parents should use a pleasant tone of voice.

*Parents should make sure their children are facing them and looking at them.

*Parents should praise their children. They can say something like "Hey, that's great. You're really doing a nice job. That's really helping me". Parents should then reward their children with points. They can say something like "Why don't you write down twenty points for being so good."

*Parents should describe the appropriate behavior to their children so they know exactly why (for what behavior) they are being praised and rewarded.

*Parents should occasionally pat their children on the back or ruffle their hair - kids love it!

*Parents should have their children acknowledge them. Children can say things like "Thanks, Mom," or "OK."

Rules for Parents When Taking Away Points

*Parents should be near their children and able to touch them.

*Parents should look at their children and smile.

*Parents should use a pleasant tone of voice. Children should not be able to tell whether parents are going to give or take away points by their tone of voice or their facial expression.

*Parents should make sure their children are facing them and looking at them.

*Parents should explain in a calm manner what behavior was inappropriate.

*Parents should then give the fine.

*Parents should make sure their children accept the fine appropriately (see "Rules for Children" below).

*Prompting the appropriate responses will sometimes be necessary, for example, "Come on, look at me. That's better."

*If children take a point loss very well, it is good for parents to give them back part of the fine.

*If children are too mad or upset for parents to take off points, parents shouldn't force the issue.

Rather, parents should place their children in time-out (to cool off) and should take the points off for their children.

Rules for Children When Getting Points

*Children should face their parents. They should look at them and smile.

*Children should acknowledge the points they're given by saying "OK," "Thanks," or something else pleasant.

*Children should write their points down on their record sheets within five minutes. If they are not written within that time, then the points are not counted. If children are busy, it is acceptable for them to ask their parents to write down the points for them.

*Children should take their record sheet to one of their parents within five minutes and ask one of them to sign it.

*After parents have signed the record sheet, children should acknowledge this by saying something like "Thank you," and they should then return the sheet to where it is kept.

Rules for Children When Losing Points

*Children should face their parents. They should look at them and smile. They should not frown.

*Children should acknowledge the point loss by saying something like "OK," or "I'll get my record sheet." Children should continue to look at their parents and they should be pleasant.

*Children should write the point loss on their record sheet. If they forget, the fine should double after five minutes.

*Children should then have one of their parents sign the record sheet. They should continue to be pleasant.

*After parents have signed the record sheet, children should acknowledge this by saying "Thanks," or something similar. They should then return the sheet to where it is kept.



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