

Behavior Management While Distance Learning

A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

In these uncertain and unprecedented times, households across the state are adjusting to student learning and instruction happening in the home.

This transition may be difficult for some students, and problem behaviors may occur.

The purpose of this guide is to provide strategies and resources for parents and caregivers to manage student behavior while implementing distance learning.

The information within is meant to aid in making home learning as productive and stress-free as possible for parents and students.

Click on a topic to learn more:

Scheduling

Reinforcement

Escape & Avoidance Behavior

Additional information can be accessed by clicking on these symbols located throughout the guide:



Downloadable Content



Video Link

An Introduction from Dr. Mary Ann Hubbard-Shepherd of Oklahoma Pediatric Therapy Center:



Additional Resources

- Comprehensive Integrated Three-Tiered Model of Prevention (Ci3T) Intervention Library
- Oklahoma Parents Center Resource Page
- Oklahoma Tiered Intervention System of Support (OTISS)
- Oklahoma State Department of Education

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Scheduling

Minor adjustments to your schedule can make a major difference in reducing stress



Be Strategic

Children tend to do better with short durations of work

Arrange your schedule for success:

- List everything you would like for your child to get done in the day
- Divide those tasks into easy/fun tasks and harder/less preferred tasks

Alternate easy and hard tasks when creating your schedule

Build Momentum

Schedule several easier tasks in a row before a hard task

Follow a hard task with your child's most preferred task

Step 1 MAKE A TASK LIST

- Eat breakfast
- Practice spelling words
- Read for 10 mins
- Play outside
- Clean up dishes
- Do an art project
- Take out trash
- Get dressed
- Play a game

Step 2 SORT INTO EASY AND HARD

Easy

- Eat breakfast
- Play outside
- Do an art project
- Play a game
- Get dressed

Hard

- Practice spelling words
- Read for 10 mins
- Take out trash
- Clean up dishes

Step 3 ORGANIZE TO BUILD MOMENTUM

- Get dressed (easy)
- Eat breakfast (easy)
- Clean up dishes (hard)
- Play a game (easy)
- Read for 10 mins (hard)
- Practice spelling words (hard)
- Do an art project (easy)
- Take out trash (hard)
- Play outside (easy)

Build Reinforcement Into Your Schedule

Make your schedule activity based, not time based

- By working through your schedule this way, preferred items and activities can be accessed by completing tasks and are not based upon time
- Organizing your schedule this way will motivate your child to finish tasks they don't like so that they can get to ones that are more fun

Keep reminding them what is coming on the schedule, especially when it is something they want to do

- "remember, after you finish ____, you can watch your show"
- "You just have __ things left on your list before you can go play"

Acknowledge when your child accomplishes each task and praise them for their hard work (even when they complete an easy task)

- "you are doing a great job!"
- "I'm so proud of you!"
- "thank you for doing ___!"



Other Scheduling Tips

Provide Clear Signals



When working from home, use signs or signals around the house to show when you are available

I can talk

The green sign is for when you are not working and while you might not be able to play, you are able to talk, answer questions, and you are available if needed.

I am working, but can talk if needed

The yellow sign is for when you are working and prefer not to be interrupted but, if they need something, you can make an exception

I am busy, please do not

The red sign is for times when you might be on the phone or a video conference and cannot be interrupted

When using the red sign:

- Provide a way for others to leave notes or otherwise tell you what they need, and make sure these notes will go in a place where you can see them
- Before using this system, explain what a true emergency is to your children, and that they can interrupt you when the red sign is up if someone is hurt or bleeding
- If your child does interrupt you when the red sign is up, remind them of the rules and redirect them to leave you a note.
- Try not to leave the red sign up for long periods of time

Use Visual Cues

Write out the schedule for the day and, as you move from one task to the next, mark it off and review what is coming next

- "First you are going to do your worksheet, then you will get to play a board game."

Transition Between Activities

- To ease transitions between preferred and less preferred activities, give warnings that the activity is ending
 - Don't just give 1 warning. Give at least 3
- Hold firm to your time
- Important: when time is up, firmly end the activity (even if you have to unplug a device or physically take it away)
- It may take time for children to adjust to new transition rules

Practice Makes Perfect

- Schedules are rarely perfect the first day.
- Remember you and your children are learning something new.
- It will take some practice and some trial and error
- Don't give up after the first day, make adjustments and try again the next day





A work contract, not a work improvement plan

Reinforcement

What is Reinforcement?

Reinforcement Is:

Anything that increases the likelihood that an individual will engage in the same behavior in the future

Reinforcement Is Not:

Based on if we think we are giving something good (example: candy is not reinforcing to people who don't like candy)

Isn't Reinforcement Bribery?

Bribery

Given after a problem behavior
Given to stop a problem behavior

Reinforcement

Given prior to problem behavior
Put in place before the problem behavior has a chance to begin

When Implementing

1. Decide what task needs to be done
2. Decide what your child will earn for completing the task

Example:
using reinforcement to rate and improve behavior throughout the day



Types of Reinforcement

Reinforcement does not have to be money or a physical item
Many things can count as reinforcers:



Attention From parents and friends

- Playing a game together
- Uninterrupted time with a parent
- Helping a parent with a task or activity
- Going for a walk together
- Verbal praise/recognition
- Physical touch (hugs, high fives, fist bumps)
- Phone calls to grandparents
- Calling/talking to friends
- Posts on social media



Activities Special privileges and events

- Electronics
- iPad
- Video Games
- Family movie night
- Family game night
- TV
- Playing outside
- Playing in the water
- Painting/craft activities
- Access to social media
- Watching YouTube



Escape A free pass to get out of nonpreferred tasks

- Reduction in chores (one free day)
- Reduction in assignment (only required to complete half)
- Free assistance in completing a task
- Removal of nonpreferred activity



Tangibles Physical Items

- Favorite Toys
- Games
- Special treats
- Dessert
- Candy
- Snacks



Post Reinforcement Pause

Following the rules is hard and children's performance is sometimes inconsistent

Post Reinforcement Pause

- A brief dip in performance or behavior immediately following reinforcement.

What it means:

- After receiving reinforcement, your child may need a break from working

What it does not mean:

- That your behavior plan is not working

What can help:

- Vary your reinforcers or provide several reinforcers for your child to choose from.
- Have child work towards little rewards instead of one big goal
- Vary the frequency of rewards (wheel of rewards, draw popsicle sticks)

Increasing the Value of Reinforcement

- You do not have to give unlimited access to a reinforcer
- Allowing unlimited access to reinforcers lowers motivation
- Think about this: what are your child's responsibilities and what are their privileges?

Privileges vs Rights

Rights

- Cannot be taken away
- Food, water, shelter, love, education, safety

Privileges

- Earned, and access can be taken away
- Toys, electronics, events, activities

Reinforcement Systems

- Token Economies
- Level Plans



Escape and Avoidance Behavior

It is our job to teach children how to persist and focus on difficult tasks and how that persistence can lead to rewards.

- We all have tasks we try to avoid, and children are no different
- Escape/Avoidance Behaviors can include tantrums, negotiation, leaving the room, or any other behavior that helps to delay a task

- Remember, learning to behave can be hard work for a child
- Children can learn responsibility and to persist with difficult tasks through behavior contracts and self-monitoring

Behavior Contracts



Active Participation from all Parties

- The more input you get from your child, the more likely they will honor the contract
- Negotiate. Be willing to accept some of their ideas and make sure you include ideas of your own
- Set realistic goals and work towards bigger goals
- Have all parties agree to and sign contract

Child Responsibilities

- What do you want them to do?
- Set specific expectations and give examples:

Be Respectful

- Acknowledge someone when they ask you to do something (Say 'okay' or 'got it')
- Complete tasks in a timely manner (5 mins or less)
- Put away/down cell phone when someone is talking to you

Do Your School Work

- Complete daily school assignments before lunch
- Assignments should be completed with 2 or less reminders
- Assignments should be completed accurately and with good effort
- Ask for assistance if you need help

Get Along with Your Siblings

- Don't go in their room/space without permission
- Ask before borrowing their belongings
- If they ask you to stop, you listen or ask for parental guidance

Consistency is Key!

If you don't follow through, your child won't follow through

If you are inconsistent in following the contract, your child's performance will be inconsistent too

If you break the rules of the contract, your child will break the rules of the contract

Your child will test the limits. The only way to stop this is to give incentives for following the limit and consequences for breaking it (Consequences do not have to be an added punishment. They can include missing out on a reward)

There may be resistance, but consistency on your part will increase consistency in your child's behavior

A contract between a child and parent detailing each person's responsibilities and what they will receive for honoring those expectations (better for older children and teenagers)

Essential Components

Parent Responsibilities

- What will you do?
- Show your child that you are willing to change your behavior too
- Commit to providing agreed upon rewards

- Will provide help/assistance with school work/assignments
- Will provide help/assistance when asked with sibling disagreements
- Will put down their cell phone when asked a question.
- Will provide agreed upon rewards/consequences within agreed upon timeframes

Timeframe

- Start with a short timeframe for your contract, you may need to renegotiate terms after you have tested it out for a week
- You can always extend the contract if it's working

Rewards/Reinforcement

- What child earns for accomplishing their goals
- Make sure rewards are attainable and things that you can provide
- Rewards don't have to be money or physical things (see Reinforcement for ideas on rewards)

Progress Monitoring

- Decide how you will measure progress
- Evaluate expectations individually instead of as a package
 - Example: child was respectful and did school work, but fought with a sibling. If progress is all or nothing, they will not be rewarded for their efforts
- Measure progress several times per day and not just at the end of the day to give your child more chances for success

Decide on a goal

- 80% success is a great starting point
 - Example: if you monitor progress twice a day (2) for 5 days per week, and you do this for 3 goals, the child has 30 opportunities work towards their goal. (2 x 5 x 3 = 30)
 - 80% success in this case would be 24/30
- Nobody's perfect. Everyone has bad days and your child will struggle in some areas more than others
- Goals can be set based on performance:
 - 70% success = small reward
 - 80% success = medium reward
 - 90% success = big reward

Can be useful in keeping your child

Self-Monitoring



Essential Components

Expectations/Reflection Questions

- Pick 2-3 questions for child to ask themselves while working:
 - Am I working on my assignment?
 - Am I doing what I was asked?
 - Do I have a quiet voice?
 - Am I giving good effort?

Time Frame

- Decide when child should practice self-monitoring and for how long
 - Only when doing school work or other times during the day?
 - 30 minutes of practice or 60?

Check-In

- Decide how often child will ask themselves if they are meeting expectations.
 - Example: for a 30 min period, you might have them check in every 2 mins (15 opportunities). For a 60 min period, you might have them check in every 5 mins (12 opportunities)

Goals and Rewards

- Set a goal for child
 - Will it be 70, 80, or 90% success?
- Decide what the reward will be for meeting the goal

Steps to Practice Self-Monitoring

1. Set timer for your intervals
2. When the timer goes off, child should reflect and ask themselves if they are meeting expectations
3. Child should document if they met expectations/were successful
4. Child should repeat steps 2 and 3 until the session ends
5. At end of session, have child calculate their success
6. Reward child if they met their goal