

Setting Up a Reward System

If the Child Needs a Concrete or Tangible Reminder

Create a marble jar reward system. This is an easy-to-implement and flexible system:

- 1 Find a clear jar or plastic container, or you can use a clear bag. Put the child's name on it, or he or she may want to decorate the container. You can put a sign on the jar reminding him or her about the thing that will earn rewards.
- 2 Choose an easy item to drop in the jar. You could use coins, poker chips, pieces of pasta, glass beads or marbles, or even homemade "bonus bucks" or tickets.
- 3 Assign values to the reward, such as each marble equals 1 minute of computer or television or game time, or can be used toward a purchase (e.g., iTunes, books). You should come up with the rewards together, and the child should be able to earn the rewards pretty quickly to start with.
- 4 Every time you catch the child being good or trying hard, drop one to five marbles into the container. Be sure to tell him or her exactly how that reward was earned (e.g., "Great job doing your homework. That's two marbles!" or "Well done waiting your turn in line today! That's two marbles."). When you are away from the container, you can carry a zippered plastic bag to hold the rewards as the child earns them.
- 5 Assign a higher value or give more marbles when situations or skills are particularly difficult (e.g., "You were right on time this morning and earned five marbles!" or "You completed the paragraph all on your own and earned five marbles!").
- 6 Give bonus rewards for particularly good behaviors (e.g., "You did a great job turning that big deal into a littler deal. You earned 10 bonus marbles!"). Try to give bonus rewards every day.
- 7 Share this system with school personnel, grandparents, therapists, and anyone who could use it while they are with the child.



This handout was adapted from *Solving Executive Function Challenges: Simple Ways to Get Kids with Autism Unstuck and on Target* by Lauren Kenworthy, Ph.D., Laura Gutermuth Anthony, Ph.D., Katie C. Alexander, M.S., OTR, Monica Adler Werner, M.A., Lynn Cannon, M.Ed., & Lisa Greenman, J.D.