

Guide to Creating a Reinforcement Plan

Review the necessary steps and considerations for a reinforcement plan that can be used to teach and increase a desired skill or behavior. Consider the examples offered and the differences between an acceptable and poor example.

Step 1 Identify the target behavior or skill that you want to see continue and increase. Consider the frequency of opportunities for the youth to practice the skill.	Acceptable Example Sue will wait for an adult to walk with her when leaving the school building or leaving her house. <i>Sue has at least 10 opportunities a day to practice this skill.</i>	Poor Example Sue will wait for an adult before entering the grocery store when shopping every other Saturday. <i>Two opportunities a month gives little opportunity to practice.</i>
Step 2 Collect baseline data. What is the youth currently able to do in reference to the target behavior or skill? Considerations may include: How often (frequency)? How long (duration)? How intense? How independent?	Acceptable Example After 5 days of data collection, the baseline is: Given 10 opportunities, Sue currently waits for an adult to walk with her only 1 time (10%). In each instance, she is being told verbally to wait as she moves towards the door.	Poor Example After a team meeting where the plan was discussed, the team agreed the baseline is: Sue rarely waits for an adult to walk with her when leaving the school or home. <i>Using a discussion without having collected data to identify a baseline is not adequate. This baseline is not specific enough to measure progress.</i>

<p>Step 3</p> <p>Establish goals or performance benchmarks.</p> <p>Describe in measurable terms when the youth has reached the desired target behavior or skill. Define the goal or benchmark using the same measurements as the baseline.</p>	<p>Acceptable Example</p> <p>Given a prompt prior to moving towards the exit, Sue will wait for an adult to walk with her out of the door when leaving the school or house 80% of the opportunities.</p> <p><i>The team may wish for this skill to be 100% for safety purposes. However, the benchmark for this plan is 80%. Additional interventions and supports may be needed if there are safety concerns.</i></p>	<p>Poor Example</p> <p>Sue will improve her wait time for an adult when leaving the school or house.</p> <p><i>"Improve" does not provide enough information to know when the goal or benchmark has been met. It is too vague.</i></p>
<p>Step 4</p> <p>Identify a set of specific reinforcers that are individualized to this youth.</p> <p>Use reinforcement and preference inventories or surveys as needed. Identify a variety of types of reinforcers. Review the Considerations for Selection of Reinforcers Checklist in <i>The Power of Reinforcement Navigation Essentials</i> toolkit for guidance on selection.</p>	<p>Acceptable Example</p> <p>Sue's team identified the following reinforcers: social (ex: verbal praise, high fives), tangible (ex: hold a favorite item, candy), and activity (ex.: tell a joke, play "I Spy" when walking), and reinforcers that included her special interests (talking about Pokémon when walking). A preference survey was used.</p>	<p>Poor Example</p> <p>Sue's team decided to give her verbal praise, high fives, or a piece of candy.</p> <p><i>This is a very limited reinforcement list with little variety.</i></p>
<p>Step 5</p> <p>Youth Choice. Create a method for the youth to select a reinforcer.</p> <p>Develop a reinforcement menu that is visual and understandable to the youth.</p>	<p>Acceptable Example</p> <p>Sue will be presented with a written list of three options. She will choose one that she will earn by waiting for the adult.</p>	<p>Poor Example</p> <p>Sue is told what she is working for by her teacher or support staff.</p> <p><i>Although Sue may like the reinforcer the adult selects, the opportunity to choose can increase the value of the reinforcer.</i></p>

<p>Step 6</p> <p>Select a schedule of reinforcement and determine how often the youth will be reinforced.</p>	<p>Acceptable Example</p> <p>Reinforcement will begin with a continuous schedule of reinforcement of her selected reinforcer. Her selected reinforcer will be paired with verbal praise each time she demonstrates waiting.</p> <p>When reaching 80% success on goal, the schedule will change to an intermittent variable ratio of 2, meaning Sue will receive reinforcement after waiting 1, 2, or 3 times or an average of 2.</p>	<p>Poor Example</p> <p>Reinforcement will begin with Sue being reinforced frequently and will gradually fade based on how often the teacher or caregiver believes she needs the reinforcement.</p> <p><i>This schedule is too vague and is not based on data.</i></p>
<p>Step 7</p> <p>Assure that when the reinforcement plan is initiated, the schedule of reinforcement begins with continuous reinforcement.</p>	<p>Acceptable Example</p> <p>As the plan begins, Sue will receive reinforcement each time she waits. (See Step 6)</p>	<p>Poor Example</p> <p>Reinforcement will begin with Sue being reinforced frequently.</p> <p><i>Too vague. (See Step 6)</i></p>
<p>Step 8</p> <p>Include considerations in the reinforcement plan that will prevent the youth from growing tired of the reinforcers (satiation of reinforcers).</p>	<p>Acceptable Example</p> <p>Sue's team has identified multiple types of reinforcers with different value. She will be presented with different options throughout the week. The team will review the completed preference survey for more ideas if needed.</p>	<p>Poor Example</p> <p>Sue's team will increase their excitement in the verbal praise or increase the amount of candy if she seems to become less interested in the reinforcers.</p> <p><i>Increasing more of the same item may cause the youth to more quickly grow tired of the reinforcer.</i></p>

<p>Step 9</p> <p>Monitor the youth's progress.</p> <p>Select a method to collect data that will allow the team to compare the baseline to the progress. In other words, progress data should be the same type of data as the baseline data.</p> <p>Based on progress or lack of progress demonstrated by the data collection, consider how to continue the plan. Are modifications or additions to the current plan needed? Do reinforcement schedules, reinforcers, or supports need to be changed or added?</p>	<p>Acceptable Example</p> <p>A data sheet will be used to record the reinforcer used and will indicate if Sue successfully waits for an adult before leaving school or the house. A comment section will be included for observations or comments.</p> <p>After 4-5 days, if waiting has not improved, review the reinforcers being used to potentially identify reinforcers with more value. Consider adding a visual reminder to wait for an adult that is placed by the doors. Consider how long she must wait for an adult and if the length of wait time is too long as she is learning this new skill.</p>	<p>Poor Example</p> <p>A data sheet will be used to record how long Sue waits at the door before leaving the school or the house.</p> <p>After 4-5 days, if waiting time has not improved, candy reinforcer will be increased to 2 or 3 pieces.</p> <p><i>The data being collected reflects a length of time (duration); however the baseline is how many times she waits. This is not comparable data. Additionally, the modifications to the plan are limited and do not reflect added value or variety. Modification of plan is too limited.</i></p>
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Youth's Name: _____ **Date of Plan:** _____

Use the steps below to develop a reinforcement plan. For additional support, review the information and resources in [The Power of Reinforcement Navigation Essentials](#) toolkit. The [AIM Module on Reinforcement](#) is an excellent resource for a deeper dive into reinforcement planning.

Step	Plan
<p>1. Identify the target behavior or skill that you want to see continue and increase.</p> <p>Consider the frequency of opportunities for the youth to practice the skill.</p>	
<p>2. Collect baseline data. What is the youth <i>currently</i> able to do in reference to the target behavior or skill?</p> <p>Considerations include: How often (frequency)? How long (duration)? How intense? How independent?</p>	

<p>3. Establish goals or performance benchmarks.</p> <p>Describe in measurable terms when the youth has reached the desired target behavior or skill. Define the goal or benchmark using the same measurements as the baseline.</p>	
<p>4. Identify a set of specific reinforcers that are individualized to this youth.</p> <p>Use reinforcement and preference inventories or surveys as needed. Identify a variety of types of reinforcers.</p>	
<p>5. Youth Choice. Create a method for the youth to select a reinforcer.</p> <p>Develop a reinforcement menu that is visual and understandable to the youth.</p>	
<p>6. Select a schedule of reinforcement and determine how often the youth will be reinforced.</p>	

<p>7. Assure that when the reinforcement plan is initiated, the schedule of reinforcement begins with continuous reinforcement.</p>	
<p>8. Include considerations in the reinforcement plan that will prevent the youth from growing tired of the reinforcers (satiation of reinforcers).</p>	
<p>9. Monitor the youth's progress.</p> <p>Select a method to collect data that will allow the team to compare the baseline to progress.</p> <p>Based on the progress or lack of progress demonstrated by the data collection, consider how to continue the plan. Are modifications or additions to the current plan needed? Do reinforcement schedules, reinforcers, or supports need to be changed or added?</p>	