



Behavior Contracts

What is a behavior contract?


- A behavior contract, also called a contingency contract, is a document that specifies an agreement or deal between two or more parties that is focused on a specific behavior or behaviors being done and then access to a reward being given (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2020).
- These contracts should involve your child and either yourself or another adult responsible for monitoring behavior and rewards.
- [Behavior Contract Video](#)



What makes behavior contracts effective?

1. Clear expectations. It is important for both the behavior section and the reward section to be clear so everyone knows exactly what needs to happen.
2. Rewards. The opportunity to access rewards will be the motivation for your child to behave in the way you are asking them to.
3. Follow through. Following through on either delivering or not delivering reinforcement based on whether or not the expectation was met will make your contract effective because your child will know when they will have access to reinforcement and when they will not.





When and why should I use a behavior contract?

- Behavior contracts are only appropriate for those who can remember their expectations and follow the set rules.
- Behavior contracts are great for a lot of children, especially older children, children who are able to process rules and instructions easily, and children who are aware of the behaviors that need to be changed.
- Along with being responsive to rules, they should be able to understand (not necessarily read) their contract and all of its content with ease, and be able to sign it or signal their agreement with it in some way.
- Behavior contracts have been shown to be effective in changing behavior related to school work and performance, off-task and disruptive behavior, and self management skills (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2020).

How do I develop a behavior contract?

Step 1: Discuss the contract with your child

- Have a meeting that includes everyone involved to discuss the contract.
- Make sure that you and/or the other adults responsible for monitoring the contract explain that you will have just as much of an active role in the contract as your child will.





Step 2: Choose behaviors to focus on

- The behaviors you choose to focus on are called “target behaviors”.
- If your child is willing to join you in identifying behaviors they could work on, have them help you identify the target behaviors. You can also choose these by yourself and then discuss them with your child.
- Make sure the behaviors are specific. Your child should know exactly what to do and/or what not to do to earn their reward.



Let's
WORK
TOGETHER

Step 3: Determine reward options

- With your child, develop a list of items and/or activities that they would like to earn for following their part of the contract. They should be preferred and highly motivating.
- Make sure these are things you can actually deliver! Do not offer an option that will not be available.
- Your child will be working hard to earn these things, and getting them when they earn them will help increase the likelihood that they continue to do the behaviors you want.



Step 4: Write and sign the contract

- The next step is to actually write the contract!
- In the contract, include:
 - Your child's part and what you expect of them
 - Your part and what they can expect of you
 - A space to record progress if necessary
- After the contract is written and all parties accept it, each person should sign the contract or make some mark or signal that each party agrees to adhere to the contract





Contract Components: Child's Expectations

- Each contract should start with the expectations for your child.
 - It should include what is to be done (including details if necessary), who will be doing it, how they must do it, and for how long/when they must do it.
 - "Jake will finish his homework (math, reading, science, and spelling), by 5:00 pm each school day"
 - Whenever possible, try to focus on what you WANT them to do (i.e., "have a quiet voice" instead of "don't scream"). Be positive!



stay
POSITIVE



Contract Components: Adult's Expectations

- The next thing that your contract should have is what you or the adult(s) in charge of the contract are expected to do if your child does their part.
- It should include the same parts that the child's expectations contain: what is to be done (including details if necessary), who will be doing it, how they must do it, and for how long/when they must do it.
 - “Grandma or Dad will let Jake choose dinner on Friday nights after a week of 4/5 successful days”.
- Remember that you only follow your expectations if your child has done their part.

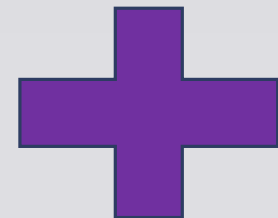
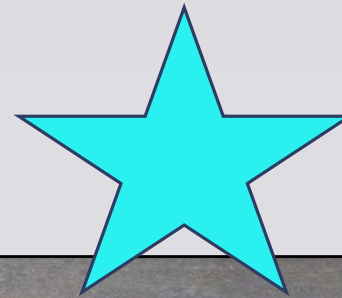
Contract Considerations

- Contracts can look many different ways. Choose a version that works for you! A quick handwritten contract will work just as well as a fancy typed one.
- Important: if your child does not meet expectations and/or breaks the contract, their consequence is that they don't get their reward. You do not need to add any other consequences.
- It's important that your child also knows exactly when they will get their reward. Make sure to specify when they'll get it!



Contract Components: Recording Progress

- You should have some method of recording your child's progress if applicable (if they need multiple days of something, for example). This should be accessible by your child to monitor their own progress.
- This can be simple, like boxes or lines for each section and some mark to indicate whether your child met their expectations or not.
- Ideas for markers:
 - "+" for meeting expectations, "-" for not
 - Putting an "x", smiley face, star, heart, or other symbol on the times expectations were met and leaving the others blank
- If your child does not respond well to negative feedback, leave the unsuccessful sections blank.



Behavior Contract Examples

Behavior Contract Between James and Dad

James: I will clean my room (bring cups to kitchen, pick up clothes, make bed, and put away toys) at least 3 times each week without being asked to. If I need help, I can ask for help.

Dad: I will play video games with James for at least 30 minutes on Friday nights after a successful week.

We will check my progress on: Friday afternoons when Dad gets home from work

Room cleaned?

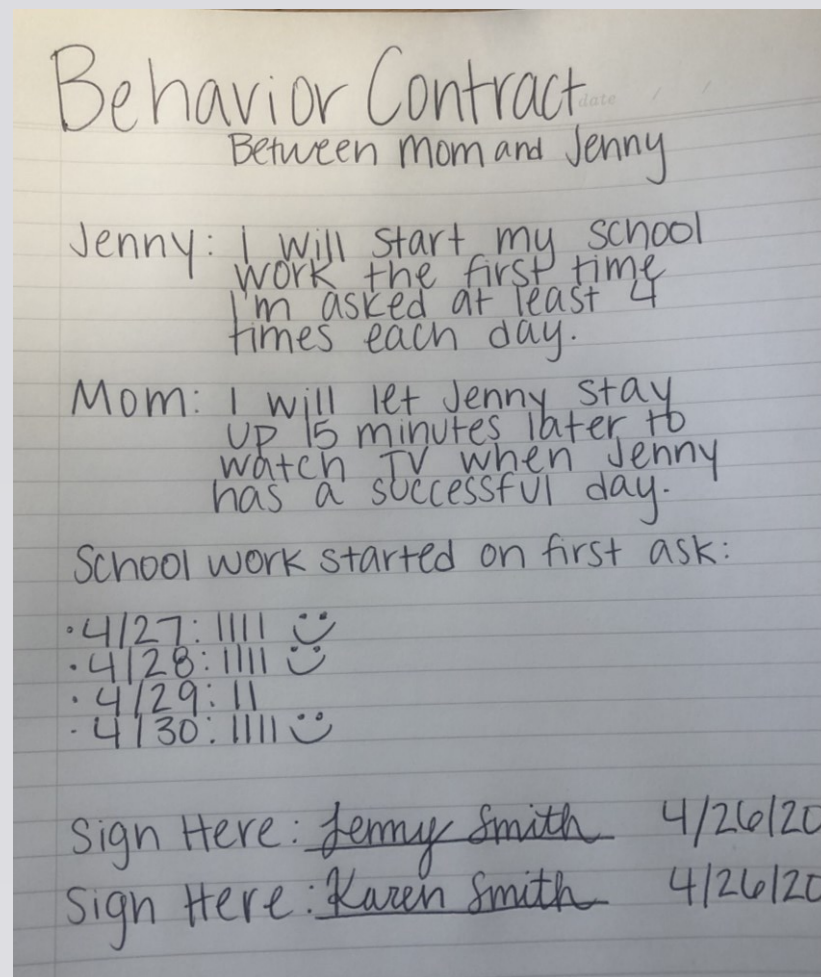
Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	☺			☺		☺

Sign here: James Johnson

Date: 5/1/20

Sign here: Dave Johnson

Date: 5/1/20





Other Tips and Frequently Asked Questions

- Get creative! Make it fun and cater to what your child likes! Your contracts can be as simple or as complicated as you'd like!
- Remember that it is important that you and your child both follow your part of the agreement! If they do not get their reward when they have earned it, they might not be motivated to do their part anymore.
- My contract doesn't seem to be working. Should I keep trying it?
 - Feel free to modify your contract if it's not working! The contract needs to be something that both you and your child can follow. Just make sure everyone is in agreement.
- Can I use a contract for small things or just big things?
 - A contract can be used for anything! They are often used for things over longer periods of time, but if you want to use one for something small or short, you definitely can!

Behavior Contract Resources

- There are many free and printable behavior contract templates online if you don't want to make your own. A search of "behavior contracts" will bring them up.
- Buckeye Union School District also has free resources on their website. To access these, click [here](#) or go to www.buckeyeusd.org and click the drop down menu for "District Services". Then, click "Mental Health & Behavioral Resources". Under the heading on the page, click the black link that says "CLICK HERE". On the Student Services Resources page, go to the top right corner and click "Home" then "Behavior Support". There you will see behavior resources. There is information on behavior contracts in the "Troubleshooting Challenging Behaviors at Home" section.

