

Intervention Name: Behavior Contracts

Function of Intervention:

This intervention is intended to increase appropriate behavior and/or decrease inappropriate behavior. It may also be used as an intervention to increase teacher and student treatment integrity (by creating motivation for each party to follow-through and be accountable).

Brief Description:

Behavior contracts are a formal method for a student and teacher to discuss and agree on the definitions of the incidences of behavior that needs to be changed. In this process, they write a “contract” together that clearly states the definitions of the behaviors that are targeted for change along with the antecedents, behaviors, and consequences (reinforcers or punishers) both parties will be responsible for during the intervention. This intervention can also be used to create contracts for small groups, entire classrooms, or between peers.

What “Common Problems” Does This Address?

A short list of common behaviors addressed by this intervention includes decreasing the amount of time a student spends out of their seat, increasing a student’s academic engagement, decreasing the number of times a student speaks out of turn, increasing prosocial behavior, decreasing frustration due to miscommunication, and almost any other behavior problem that occurs within an educational environment.

Procedures:

1. Select 2 or less target behaviors for change.
2. Before starting the intervention tally of the number of times the student is demonstrating each target behavior on a typical day in different settings.
3. Meet with the student and agree on a mutual definition (including examples and nonexamples) of the target behavior(s). Write the description of the target behavior into the contract. When trying to reduce instances of inappropriate behavior, try to focus on what you *WANT* for the student to do instead of what you don’t want for them to do.
4. Meet with the student to discuss what reinforcers or punishers you the student will expect when the target behaviors have been demonstrated.
5. Create a reinforcement schedule. Discuss the number of times (minutes, etc.) the student will have to demonstrate or refrain from the target behavior in order to earn his reward (there may be several opportunities for rewards throughout the day). Be sure to set the goal at an attainable level (do not expect a increase or decrease in behavior equal to more than 10% of the number of times collected in step 2.)
6. Include the reinforcer schedule in the contract as well as the criteria for earning/losing each reinforcer.

7. Have teacher, student, and parent (if possible) sign the contract. Make a copy of the contract for both the student and the teacher. Have it stored in an easy to reach place for both the student and the teacher.
8. Deliver the reward to the student *immediately* after he has earned it.
9. 5 days into the intervention tally the number of times the child engages in the target behavior in order to determine whether or not to adjust the intervention (i.e. frequency of receiving reinforcement, etc.) Remember, do not increase or decrease goals by more than 10%.

Critical Components that must be implemented for intervention to be successful:

- Make sure that the student has the capability of producing the appropriate behavior in every setting where there are behavioral expectations outlined in the contract. Setting an impossible goal for a student to reach is the fastest way to sabotage the effectiveness of an intervention.
- It is also essential that you involve the student in the creation of the behavioral contract. Involving the student will create a collaborate relationship between both parties and empower the student to participate in a plan to change his or her own behavior.
- Be certain that the behavioral expectations are clear and concise. Clarify expectations vividly when writing them. Ask yourself: If a stranger read these expectations would she be able to pick out the students who are doing what I expect in my class?
- Give the student multiple opportunities to be successful.

Critical Assumptions/Problem-Solving Questions to be Asked:

- Again, make sure the student is capable of demonstrating the desired behavior.
- Also, always evaluate the types of reinforcers being offered. It is typical and expected for students' desires to change over time. Always make sure that the reinforcers available for the student are also motivating to the student.

References:

- Carns, A. W. & Carns, M. R. (1994). Making behavioral contracts successful. *School Counselor*, 42, 155-160.

Sample behavior contract and reinforcement schedule for 4th grade student (pseudonyms used)

I, **Alicia Wall**, agree to raise my hand and wait to be called upon before I talk. I agree to accept an answer to a question that I don't like rather than talk back. I agree to respect my teacher. That means that if I get mad I will let her know by writing "mad" on a piece of paper and I will hold it up for Ms. Fabulous to read it. I know that she will come help me when she can. If I have to wait, I agree to ball up paper in order to release my anger and calm down while I'm waiting. I also agree to sit in my seat.

I, **Ms. Winchester**, agree to call on Alicia when she raises her hand before she talks at least two out of four times. I agree to allow Alicia to express her dislike with an answer/demand as long as she expresses it **one time** while using an appropriate voice. I understand that Alicia is entitled to her feelings, but that her feelings need to be expressed in an appropriate way. If she does not express herself using an appropriate voice or writing, I reserve the right to ignore her. I agree to respect Alicia and help her when I can. I care about Alicia and want what's best for her. I agree to address Alicia's need for help when she writes a note saying that she's angry. I agree to reward her points for appropriate behavior during class and follow the attached reinforcement schedule. I am available to listen to Alicia because I care about her.

Alicia Wall

Ms. Winchester

Date _____

Date _____

Alicia's Behavioral Intervention Reinforcement Schedule

1. Alicia will receive a daily points sheet each morning and afternoon. She will write her goal number of points for the day on the top of her points sheet. At the end of the day these sheets will be given back to Ms. Winchester.
2. Alicia will read through her expectations before the beginning of every class.
3. Alicia will keep her daily point sheet taped to her desk so that she and Ms. Winchester can see it and remind themselves of their agreement.
4. At the end of each activity, Alicia will earn one point from Ms. Winchester for each goal he completed according to the daily points sheet goals.
5. Once Alicia earns points those points cannot be removed by anyone.
6. If Alicia has an activity period during which she does not earn as many points as she would like, she will start a *new activity period* and try to earn all of her points for the next activity. If she becomes upset or refuses to do work during one activity period, allowing for her to "start over" will improve her chances to engage in more appropriate behavior for the rest of the day.
7. If Alicia earns her goal points for each half of the day or her goal points for the entire day, Alicia will be able to choose from a list of rewards at the end of the

day. If her reward is not available on the day that it is chosen, it will be carried over into the following day and be given to her as soon as Ms. Winchester deems it appropriate for her to have it (the sooner, the better!)

8. If Alicia does not earn her points, she and Ms. Winchester will say “ it is ok, everyone has a bad day, we will start a new day tomorrow!”
9. Target number of points:

Dec 13-17	Jan 3-7	Jan 10-14	Jan 17-21	Jan 24-28
AM: 18	AM: 20	AM: 22	AM: 25	AM: 25
PM: 12	PM: 14	PM: 16	PM: 20	PM: 20
Daily: 25	Daily: 27	Daily: 30	Daily: 35	Daily: 35

I agree to abide by these instructions!

_____ (AY)

_____ (Ms. F)

Date: _____

Date: _____