



How to Establish Yourself as a Reinforcer

Or, How to get your student to WANT to work with you!



Becoming a Reinforcer for your student

1. Identify as many potential reinforcers as possible and limit access to some of those reinforcers if necessary
2. Have a large variety and supply of reinforcing items available to give to the child
3. Approach the child and deliver reinforcement non-contingently, giving the child things that he likes for “free” (child does not need to request or “earn” reinforcers)
4. Hold item and let the child approach the implementer (avoid delivering items when child is moving away from you)
5. Maximize the # of times you provide reinforcement
 1. Break edibles into small pieces to be delivered more frequently
 2. Deliver multiple reinforcers at once
 3. Try to deliver reinforcers several times per minute
6. Talk to the child without the expectation of him/her to talk back
7. Interact in an animated and fun way to make the child WANT to be with you.
8. Follow the child’s changing interests

If the child becomes bored with a reinforcer, find another!

Be sure to deliver items that the child wants when they want it (motivation in effect)
9. Actively manipulate the environment and interact with the child so that you are required for maximum enjoyment of the activity



Examples:

- Child is on the swing – therapist pushes child
- Child is thirsty – therapist fills child’s cup a tiny bit at a time
- Child wants to go outside – therapist unlocks the door

10. Pair with the environment

- Across settings
- Across stimuli
- Across activities

Common mistakes to avoid

1. Placing demands on child

Resist urge to try to “teach” the child by asking questions or making the child “work” for reinforcers. Don’t require a response. In other words, don’t give the child any directions to “come here,” “sit down,” “look at this” etc. It is necessary to first build rapport before teaching

2. Lack of active interaction with the child

Pairing is an active process on the part of the implementer

Implementer must constantly be giving reinforcers to the child

Pairing will not be effective if the implementer just sits in the room while the child does his own thing

Implementer must continually act as the “giver” and the child should function as the “taker” (offer toy when child is bored, deliver special food, etc.)



3. Infrequent or weak reinforcement

If strong reinforcers are not given frequently, the pairing will be less effective

Find as many opportunities to deliver reinforcers as possible (several per minute)

Do NOT remove ongoing reinforcer to deliver a demand or remove the child from an enjoyable activity when the implementer arrives

Has pairing been effective?

Are you ready to teach? Ask yourself...

- Does the child run to you or away from you?
- Does the child follow you when you leave the room?
- You'll know that you are being successful if the child appears happy when you arrive!
- Once the child is frequently and willingly approaching you to obtain reinforcement, you are ready to begin teaching!

Troubleshooting

If the child is not taking offered items, ask yourself ...

- Does the child have access to these reinforcers at other times during the day?
- Can the child access these reinforcers without help (e.g., opening cabinets)?
- Can the child access these reinforcers through other people (e.g., in home or school)?
- In the past has demands been placed on this item? If so it may be aversive when delivered by adults