# Behaviour Contract

The behaviour contract is a simple positive-reinforcement intervention that is widely used by teachers to help change student behaviour. The behaviour contract sets out the expectations of student and teacher (and sometimes parents) in carrying out the intervention plan. The student usually has input into the conditions that are established within the contract for earning rewards, which makes them more likely to follow it.

## Steps in implementing this intervention

**The teacher decides which specific behaviours to select for the behaviour contract.** When possible, teachers should define behaviour targets for the contract in the form of positive, pro-academic or pro-social behaviours.

For example, a teacher may be concerned that a student frequently calls out answers during class without first raising their hand and waiting for permission. For the contract, the teacher's concern that the student talks out may be restated positively as "The student will participate in class lecture and discussion, raising his hand and being recognized by the teacher before offering an answer or comment." In many instances, the student can take part in selecting positive goals to increase the child's involvement in, and motivation toward, the behavioural contract.

**The teacher meets with the student to draw up a behaviour contract.** (If appropriate, other school staff members and perhaps the student's parents or carers are invited to participate as well.) The teacher next meets with the student to draw up a behaviour contract.

The contract should include:

* **a listing of student behaviours that are to be reduced or increased.** As stated above, the student's behavioural goals should usually be stated in positive, goal-oriented terms. Also, behavioural definitions should be described in sufficient detail to prevent disagreement about student compliance. The teacher should also select target behaviours that are easy to observe and verify.

For instance, completion of class assignments is a behavioural goal that can be readily evaluated. If the teacher selects the goal that a child "will not steal pens from other students", though, this goal will be very difficult to observe and confirm.

* **a statement or section that explains the minimum conditions under which the student will earn a point, sticker, or other token for showing appropriate behaviours.**

For example, a contract may state that "Johnny will add a point to his behaviour chart each time he arrives at school on time and hands in his completed homework assignment to the teacher."

* **the conditions under which the student will be able to redeem collected stickers, points, or other tokens to redeem for specific rewards.**

A contract may state, for instance, that "When Johnny has earned 5 points on his behaviour chart, he may select a friend, choose a game from the play-materials shelf, and spend 10 minutes during free time at the end of the day playing the game."

* **bonus and consequence clauses (optional).** Although not required, bonus and consequence clauses can provide extra incentives for the student to follow the contract. A bonus clause usually offers the student some type of additional 'pay-off' for consistently reaching behavioural targets. A consequence clause may prescribe a non-preferred action for serious challenging or disruptive behaviours; e.g., the student disrupts the class or endanger the safety of self or of others.
* **areas for signature.** The behaviour contract should include spaces for both teacher and student signatures, as a sign that both parties agree to adhere to their responsibilities in the contract. Additionally, the teacher may want to include signature blocks for other staff members and/or the student's parent(s).

Behaviour contracts can take many forms. They may look like formal agreements, or they may be sticker charts. They may also include “daily report cards” that the teacher gives a student to take home. No one form is better than another. What’s important is for the contract to work well for each student.

## How can a behaviour contract help students?

A behaviour contract can be an effective tool for many reasons. Some benefits include:

* It can improve communication between home and school.
* It can make behaviour expectations explicitly clear.
* It can motivate students to self-regulate.
* It can help make students accountable for their actions.
* It can provide valuable feedback for students.
* It can be used (and adjusted) over time.
* It can be used to inform other planning.

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| **Behaviour Contract Example** |
| My Behaviour Contract will help (student name)  to use a range of strategies to stay engaged in classwork. This will be reviewed on (date). |
| **Behaviour goals** |
| *These should be stated in positive goal-oriented terms.*  *For example, Ethan will receive a sticker on his behaviour chart each time he completes his work on time, works quietly during a session, etc.* |
| **Conditions of the contract** |
| *For example, when Ethan has collected 10 stickers, he may choose one of the following rewards:*   * *10 minutes of free time at end of day within classroom* * *Choice of preferred activity* * *Surprise from teacher’s reward box* |
| **Bonus and consequence clauses** |
| *For example,*  *Bonus – If Ethan has a week where he earns all potential rewards, he will be able to choose an additional surprise from the teacher reward box.*  *Consequence – If Ethan is approached by teacher more than 5 times during a lesson due to disruptive behaviour, he will lose a chance to earn the sticker for that day.* |
| **Student Signature** |
| *For example, the student helped create this agreement and understands and agrees to the terms.* |
| **Teacher Signature** |
| *For example, the teacher agrees to carry out their part of the agreement including making sure the student receives their rewards and bonus when earned.* |
| **Parent Signature** |
| The parent agrees to promote positive behaviour and discuss the student’s progress with the behaviour contract with the student. |

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