

Points Based Rewards System for Kids

Rationale:

1. Kids are motivated to modify their behavior when there is a reward offered.
2. However, parents do not always know what it is the kids want. Or the rewards offered involve spending a lot of money.
3. If a child can choose their reward, they will choose the thing they want most.
4. A rewards system should be flexible and simple
5. A parent wants to do nice things for their kids

The system:

1. Reward children with points for doing things that you want them to do
 - a. Chores
 - b. Reading books
 - c. Playing outside
 - d. Getting caught doing something good
 - e. Etc...
2. Use a physical token (like poker chips)
 - a. Helps children to budget and save
 - b. Is countable
 - c. Is holdable
 - d. Is easily traded
 - e. Makes a satisfying 'clink' when it is dropped in a jar
 - f. Can be awarded with some ceremony
3. Decide how many points to give as a reward.
 - a. We use multiples of 5
 - b. Every chore or desired behavior is rewarded with 5 points
 - c. Increase point values for bigger tasks, or just because you want to.
4. Make a menu of rewards (We decided to make a list of things we would have let the children do anyway, just because we like them. But now there are natural limits on things like video games or TV because the children end up spending their points. Once the points are gone, the TV or game is shut off. We also set an upper limit to the amount of TV or video games that can be bought in a day)
 - a. Each item on the menu has a point value attached.
 - b. Video games and TV are 1 point per minute with an upper limit of 40 minutes per day.
 - c. Trip to the store is 80 points (that is just transport to the store, the child needs to spend their own money when they are there. We do not charge a child to go to the store if they are accompanying us on errands, as we are at the store anyway...)
 - d. Trip to the pool 150 points
 - e. Fishing 200 points
 - f. Picnic lunch on the lawn 75 points

- g. You can think of all kinds of things to let children do, but that can be a reward because they choose to invest their points in buying the activity.

Other thoughts:

The beauty of this system is that screen time is limited, and children do a lot of the limiting themselves. They skip the video game because they are saving points to go to the store to spend their allowance. They read extra books or play outside to earn points to play a game. (We reward 20 minutes of outside play with 5 points. The more they play outside the more points they get, but we end up far ahead because they spend 4 times as much time outside than they do on screen time)

Adjusting the system is easy. Being consistent is important. Reward good behavior quickly, it is too easy to lose track otherwise. Don't have children go grab their points to put in their jar. This leads to too much temptation to grab 20 instead of 5. We learned that the hard way, and had to be watchful of inter sibling point theft.