



Dot-To-Dot Reward System

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Please note that resources such as this are intended to offer guidance and suggestions. However, no claim is made that the information provided is appropriate for any specific child or family. Many families will find this information helpful and sufficient for addressing child rearing issues. Others will not. Parents are encouraged to talk with their child's pediatrician or seek help from a mental health therapist if needed.

Identify an item that your child would like to have. The item could be a toy, an article of furniture, a recreational device, or an amount of money. Be sure to include your child in the selection of the item and make sure the item fits within your budget. Following the selection of the item, draw the item on paper using dots. If you are not talented at drawing a picture then use a word and instead of spelling out the word with connected lines, uses dots so that, then write the name of the reward using dots. Make sure there are spaces between the dots. The format should be similar to dot-to-dot drawings that can occasionally be found in children's coloring books. If the item selected is expensive and your budget is limited, use a lot of dots. After the reward is selected and a drawing of the reward made, post the drawing in a place where it can be easily seen and reached by your child. Each time your child exhibits the behavior you are working on (for example, going to the bathroom in the toilet; not wetting the bed at night; making his or her bed) have him or her connect two dots. Continue in this fashion until all the dots are connected. When all the dots are connected, give your child the item that has been depicted in the drawing.

In order to make the system more motivating and fun for your child, you can increase the number of rewards that the child earns by using a grab bag. Make every third or fourth dot (less frequent if your child can earn many "dot-connections" in a day) in your drawing a little larger than the rest so that your child can easily see the larger dots. Then make up a grab bag in which there are between 30 to 70 slips of paper of equal size and shape upon which various rewards are written. Divide the rewards equally between things, privileges, parental time, edibles, and money. Examples of things are small toys, baseball cards, and additions to existing toy collections. Examples of "privileges" include staying up 10 minutes later than usual bedtime, staying up to 20 minutes later than usual bedtime, and staying up 30 minutes later than usual bedtime (that amounts to three slips); and choosing the family desert. Examples of "parental time" would be 5 minutes of mom's time to do what I want with, 10 minutes of mom's time to do what I want with, piggyback ride by dad, and so forth. Examples of "edibles" include favorite pieces of candy, gum, favorite kinds of fruit, or favorite soft drink. Examples of "money" include different denominations written down on pieces paper. You could use several pieces of paper that had only 5 cents written on it, several that had 10 cents written on it, a smaller number of pieces of paper that had 25 cents written on it and even smaller number that had 50 cents written on it and then one piece of paper that had a large amount written on it ranging from 1 to 5 dollars. Remember that the odds of getting a large amount would be 1 in whatever number of pieces of paper in the sack. Thus if you have 100 slips of paper in the grab bag the odds against getting the large amount of money would be 100 to 1. Using a large amount in this system gives it the kind of excitement that the Lotto game has for adults. Remember that it is alright to have more than one piece of paper in the bag that has the same thing written on it.

Have your child help identify possible rewards that s/he would like to earn (within limits). Also, as an extra incentive, you may wish to place pieces of paper in the bag with items listed that are “surprises” to your child. This increases the novelty and excitement of the grab bag.

When the bag is completed use it to back up the dot-to-dot reward system by allowing the child to reach into the grab bag each time the lines reach an enlarged dot. When your child pulls out that slip of paper deliver what is written on that piece of paper immediately or at least as soon as possible.