



Reinforcement (R+) ---Step-by-Step Guide---

BEFORE YOU START...

Each of the following points is important to address so that you can be sure the selected EBP is likely to address the learning needs of your student.

Have you found out more information about...?

- Identified the behavior...
- Collected baseline data through direct observation...
- Established a goal or outcome that clearly states when the behavior will occur, what the target skill is, and how the team will know when the skill is mastered...

If the answer to any of these is “no,” review the process of how to select an EBP.

This practice guide outlines how to plan for, use, and monitor the reinforcement practice.

Keep in mind that the three reinforcement procedures are:

- Positive reinforcement
- Token economy
- Negative reinforcement

While each procedure is different, the practice guide is applicable to all. When unique features are tied to a specific procedure, we will identify them through examples or cautions.


Now you are ready to start...

Step 1: R+ Planning

The planning step explains how to establish performance criterion for target skills or behaviors and identify potential reinforcers to use with learners with ASD.

1.1 Collect data on target skill or behavior

Collect data on observable and measurable target skill or behavior in a variety of settings and activities.

 *The **Time Sampling Data Collection Sheet**, **Event Sampling Data Collection Sheet**, and **Duration Data Collection Sheet** found in the Resource section will help you collect data on the target skill or behavior in order to determine if the trend is stable to begin using reinforcement.*

1.2 Establish performance criteria for program goals

Check to be sure the target skill or behavior clearly describes the context (when), the target skill or behavior to be performed (what), and how the team will know when the skill or behavior is mastered (how).

Establish at least three performance criteria for each target skill or behavior to assist team members in monitoring progress and adjust reinforcement strategies as necessary.

1.3 Identify reinforcers

The process of identifying reinforcers is different depending on the reinforcement procedure.

- Identifying reinforcers for positive reinforcement and token economy programs
 - Select reinforcers that will increase the likelihood that the target behavior or skill will be used again in the future.
 - Considerations: age of learner, potential natural reinforcers, and possible suggestions from parents or other team members
 - Conduct a reinforcer sampling
- Identifying reinforcers for negative reinforcement
 - Identify activities, events, or items that are mildly aversive and could be used as negative reinforcers.

1.4 Prepare supporting materials

Different supporting materials will be needed for each reinforcement procedure:

- Positive reinforcement:
 - Create a reinforcer menu for learner with ASD to select a desired object, activity or food.
- Token economy:
 - Identify tokens that are attractive, easy to carry, easy to dispense, and are age and developmentally appropriate for the learner with ASD.
 - Set up a system for exchanging tokens that includes “a bank” to keep track of tokens, a time and place for purchasing reinforcers

Step 1: R+ Planning (continued)

1.4 Prepare supporting materials (continued)

- Monetary value of each item
- Negative reinforcement:
 - Prepare pictorial, written, or verbal instructions that are clear, complete, specific, and aimed at the learner's skill and interest level.

Step 2: Using R+

This section describes the process of using reinforcement and includes specific steps for each reinforcement procedure.

Positive reinforcement:

- Deliver reinforcement each time learner with ASD uses target skill or behavior. Make sure the learner does not have access to the reinforcer until the target skill or behavior is used. When using an activity, material, or primary reinforcer, also deliver a social reinforcement (praise, teacher attention).
- Prevent satiation by varying reinforcers. Teach the target skill or behavior during several short instructional sessions. Select different reinforcers if satiation occurs.
- Thin reinforcers and use reinforcers consistently across settings. Once the learner has met the initial performance criterion for the target skill or behavior an intermittent reinforcement schedule should be used to fade the use of reinforcers.

Token economy:

- Describe to learners with ASD components of the token economy program. This includes:
 - The target skill or behavior they need to perform
 - Review with the learner how many tokens they need to earn before they can receive an item from the reinforcer menu
- Provide a token to the learner each time the skill or behavior is displayed. Explain to the learner why they are earning a token.
- Learners select reinforcement from the reinforcer menu during a specified time. To maintain learner's interest and motivation, adjust prices and rotate items on the reinforcer menu.
- Thin tokens and use tokens consistently across settings.

Negative reinforcement:

- Cue learners to use target skill or behavior by providing a pictorial, written, or verbal instruction cue to the learner. Do not remove the negative reinforcer until the learner uses the target skill or behavior.
- Remove negative reinforcer when target skill or behavior is used.
- Transition to positive reinforcement. Once the learner begins using the target skill or behavior with negative reinforcers, begin transitioning the learner to positive reinforcement.

Step 3: Monitoring R+

This step describes the process of collecting data and determining next steps based on the data collected.

3.1 Collect data on target behaviors

Collect data with the same data collection forms used during the planning steps. Using the same data collection forms allow team members to track a learner's use of the target skill/behavior before, during, and after reinforcement is implemented.

3.2 Adjust reinforcement based on performance criteria

Review collected data with team members and adjust reinforcement based upon if the learner with ASD is meeting performance criteria.

3.3 Determine next steps based on learner progress

If the learner with ASD is showing progress with reinforcement based upon collected data, then continue to use this practice with the learner. Gradually new target skills and behaviors can be introduced to the learner with ASD.

If the target skill or behavior is not increasing, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the target skill or behavior well defined?
- Is the skill or behavior measurable and observable?
- Is the skill or behavior too difficult for the learner?
- Was reinforcement used with fidelity?
- Are there too many reinforcers?
- Are there too few reinforcers?
- Are all team members using reinforcement in a consistent manner?
- Is reinforcement occurring at a sufficient level to maintain the behavior or target skill?

If these issues have been addressed and the learner with ASD continues not to show progress, consider selecting a different evidence-based practice to use with the learner with ASD.