



Reinforcement

What is Reinforcement?

Reinforcement is anything that happens after a behavior that makes it more likely the behavior will happen again. When a behavior is followed by something the learner likes, they are more likely to repeat it. Reinforcement is how we teach new skills, encourage positive behaviors, and make learning fun.

Types of Reinforcement

There are two main types.

Positive reinforcement adds something the learner likes after a behavior. For example, if a child cleans up toys and you give praise or a high-five, they are more likely to clean up again.

Negative reinforcement removes something the learner does not like to increase a behavior. For example, if a child puts on shoes and you stop giving repeated reminders, they are more likely to put on shoes promptly next time. Negative reinforcement is not punishment; it simply encourages the desired behavior.

Reinforcers can take many forms. Social reinforcers include praise, high-fives, and attention. Tangible reinforcers include toys, stickers, or preferred items. Activity reinforcers include music, tablet time, or access to a favorite game. Edible reinforcers (like small snacks) can be used when approved. Token systems let learners earn points or stickers toward a bigger reward.

Remember, a reinforcer only works if it increases the behavior in the future.

Using Reinforcement Effectively

Always follow the reinforcement schedule determined by your supervising BCBA. Reinforce behaviors immediately after they occur, be specific about what the learner did well, match the reinforcer to the effort, and vary reinforcers to keep them motivating. Pair yourself with the reinforcement to build rapport.

Common Mistakes

Waiting too long to reinforce
Reinforcing the wrong behavior
Using the same reinforcer too often
Giving reinforcement for free instead of earning it
Following your BCBA's plan helps avoid these mistakes and ensures consistent teaching across sessions.

Quick Tips for BTs

Reinforce immediately after the behavior
Be specific: tell the learner exactly what they did well
Vary reinforcers to keep them motivating
Always follow the BCBA's schedule
Ask your BCBA if you are ever unsure

If you are unsure about what reinforcer to use,
how to deliver it, or how to follow the
reinforcement schedule, always reach out to your
supervising BCBA for guidance.

A TRIUMPH INITIATIVE

1

aba
BT'S
ESSENTIALS

—

triumph
Behavior Support