

You Did It!

How to  
Reward and  
Motivate  
Kids  
without  
Using Food



You Can Do It!

**How to Reward  
and Motivate Kids  
Without Using Food**

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## Foreword

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) received the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices' "Healthy Kids, Healthy America" award. With this award, UDOH is working on five projects that will increase opportunities for Utah children to eat healthy and be active in the school setting. One of the projects is to work with the Utah Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and develop a compendium of PTA-generated non-food incentive ideas for distribution to elementary schools. This book will provide ideas that principals, teachers, staff, and parents can use to reward students in ways other than with food.

As the Gold Medal Schools Coordinator, I believe that schools play a powerful role in influencing students' food choices. Schools can do this by creating healthy environments for our students to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Principals, teachers, staff, parents, and the community should promote a consistent nutritional message by rewarding our students with non-food rewards.

Sarah Rigby  
Program Director, Gold Medal Schools

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## Introduction

This booklet is meant to act as a resource to help you develop new ideas around rewarding and motivating children. It is divided into sections for the classroom and at home, and for older and younger children, so that you will be able to easily identify ideas for the setting in which you are working. Many of the ideas cross over, and can be used at home and at school. Many of them can be used for both older and younger children. For this reason you'll find duplicate ideas in some cases, and in others you'll see similar ideas that have been "tweaked" to fit the home or classroom setting better. By doing this, we hope to eliminate some of the discouragement that sometimes sets in when one is overwhelmed with ideas that "just won't work" for a given child or group of children. If one idea doesn't feel right for your home or classroom, don't use it—move on and find something that is a better fit.

A heart felt thanks to the many Utah PTA members who provided most of the ideas for this book. We appreciate your willingness to embrace new concepts, implement new ideas, and especially to make difficult changes in order to do what's best for children.

It is our hope that this resource will be a springboard to inspiring new ways to help your children and students become motivated to work hard and succeed. The sky's the limit—*you can do it!*

Best wishes to you—may you and the children you love and serve enjoy perpetual good health!

**Leslie Dalton**

*Utah PTA Health Commissioner 2007-2008*

## Why Non-Food Rewards? Why Now?

A child does well on an assignment, behaves appropriately in class, or completes a task without being prompted. Her teacher throws out a mini candy bar and says, “Great job!” The child beams with pride, and is motivated to excel again, and her peers increase their efforts in the hopes that they will receive a similar reward.

Another child comes home from school with a great report card, cleans his room, and does his chores with no complaining. His parents take him out to ice cream, or offer him a special dinner at a restaurant—order anything you like!

Teachers are constantly looking for ways to motivate children, but budgets are tight and time is short. A little piece of candy won’t hurt. Or will it? Most parents don’t have a problem with their children being offered a little candy at school once in a while, so why not?

As a mom who has cleaned handfuls of candy wrappers out of my kids’ pockets after school, and then paid their dentist bills *and* seen them experience weight gain, it seems like the idea of non-food rewards can’t catch on too soon. Once in a while has become once or twice a day, and when children enter the upper grades, where they attend multiple classes with different teachers, it’s happening several times a day. Teachers and parents often don’t see the big picture of what is happening in other areas of a child’s life where they are not involved, and don’t realize that their child is being rewarded with food by multiple adults on a regular and even frequent basis.

Across the country, teachers and parents are beginning to recognize the impact that food-related practices have on children. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions, and death from diseases related to obesity is the number one killer in the U.S. Alarming, many diseases that were previously diagnosed mainly in adults are now increasingly found in children—the culprit? obesity. Some adult diseases that are now being observed in overweight children are: hardening of arteries, high blood pressure, sleep-associated breathing disorders, iron deficiency, and diabetes.<sup>1</sup>

Consider this statistic: every separate food-related practice that promotes low-nutrition foods in a school is associated with a 10 percent increase in students' body mass index (BMI).<sup>2</sup> Can we afford to continue practices that jeopardize the health of our children, when there are alternative ways to accomplish the same ends?

Children consume an estimated 35 percent to 50 percent of their calories during the school day through school meals, as well as foods and beverages sold through vending machines, a la carte in the cafeteria, school stores, and other venues. Given the amount of time that children spend in school, it is vital that the school environment support healthy eating.<sup>3</sup> One way to do this is through developing policies and encouraging practices that limit or prohibit food rewards.

Marlene Schwartz, Ph.D., Co-Director of the Yale Center for Eating and Weight Disorders, sums it up this way: "Rewarding children with unhealthy foods in school undermines our efforts to teach them about good nutrition. It's like teaching children a lesson on the importance of not smoking, and then handing out ashtrays and lighters to the kids who did the best job listening."<sup>4</sup>

The Gold Medal Schools program requires that Gold-level schools write a policy for all teachers and staff that food is not to be used as a reward or as a punishment for students. Research indicates that a young child's food preference patterns are largely influenced by repeated exposure to food, and the social context in which food is offered. Offering any food as a reward to a child tends to make that child want that food above any other.

Using food as a positive reinforcement or withholding food for punishment can lead to learned behaviors that may lead to major weight problems. When children are rewarded with food, they associate "junk food" with being good or feeling happy. Soon, they learn to eat every time they want to reward themselves or to cheer themselves up rather than eating to satisfy hunger.<sup>5</sup>

Fortunately, there are alternatives! We *can* reward children (and adults) in meaningful, lasting ways. Let's work together to end outdated, unhealthy traditions by replacing them with practices that promote good health.



You Can Do It!

Rewarding and Motivating  
**Children at School**

## Note to Teachers

First of all, you are wonderful! There aren't enough positive words to express how much you do for children, molding their minds, teaching them to control their bodies, and encouraging them to grow into responsible adults. It's a tough job, and sometimes you probably feel like some people are making it tougher by trying to impose new ideas into your classroom when you may feel like things are going swimmingly already, or you might feel like you're barely hanging on with what you're trying to do.

If you're currently of the mindset that children won't respond to anything but treats (you're not alone), or if you have limited funds for providing extras in your classroom, read on! We hope to convince you that not only can you save money by taking candy and sweet treats out of the classroom, but your students will be better behaved, more motivated, and more successful without them. It's true that you will have to spend more time—at least initially—both in preparation and with students, but won't the results be worth it? And if your students are better motivated in general, perhaps you'll find you have a little more time available for rewarding instead of disciplining. Wouldn't that be an enjoyable treat for *you*!

You've noticed that there the number of children with attention problems is increasing. You've seen that there are more children in your classroom that are overweight and/or physically inactive. Additionally, the number of children with food allergies, diabetes, and asthma is on the rise. Certain food ingredients or substances may actually be dangerous to have in your classroom. Consider the additional problems that arise or are exacerbated when children are given foods with little or no nutritional value:

1. Your health education efforts just went out the door, because the message the children receive is that there are certain foods that are good for you, but you only want to choose those when you have to—in order to make your body work well. For fun and enjoyment, choose sweets!

2. Although there isn't scientific evidence to back it up, many teachers share anecdotal experiences of increased hyperactivity, mood swings, and decreased attention span after children eat sugary snacks. Perhaps you've experienced this phenomenon in your own classroom.
3. Children who are constantly rewarded with food grow up to become adults who reward themselves with food. When was the last time you took yourself out to dinner to celebrate a success? We have a culture of food—and that's not all bad—but with obesity rates rising nationwide, it's time to curb our appetites.

Other things to consider as you venture into this new mindset: consider offering several different rewards or incentives to children, so that they can choose the one that motivates them most.

As always, make sure rewards are offered in a way that ensures the safety of all children, by providing adequate supervision. If you can't provide an opportunity without leaving a child or children alone, it would be a wise idea to choose a different reward.

Thank you for all you do to help children succeed!



You Can Do It!

Reward and Motivate  
**Elementary-Age Students**  
Without Using Food

## No-Cost Ideas

### TIME

A group of Utah students in the Gold Medal Schools program participated in a survey.<sup>6</sup> They were asked what kinds of things made them want to work harder. Surprisingly, candy was far down on the list! The thing they wanted most? Time spent with a significant adult. The gift of your time can make a tremendous impact on the life of a child. Take a look at these ideas and find some that will work for you, or that can be modified to fit your busy schedule. Not all of them require *your* time—ask classroom volunteers and school staff and administration to help. It takes a village!

1. Spend recess with your teacher.
2. Take a walk around the school with your teacher or principal.
3. Read a book aloud to your teacher.
4. Have a book read to you by your teacher (or a classroom volunteer).
5. Spend the day (or a given amount of time) with the principal.
6. Play a game with the teacher (or a classroom volunteer).

If your principal is willing, try networking with other teachers to select a group of children that will get to play a game or participate in an activity with the principal once a week as a reward.

Perhaps a small group from different classes could meet in the library to have the principal read a fun picture book to them. This could also work with parent volunteers, or your school librarian.

Some time rewards involve giving your student the opportunity to be on her own.

1. Read a book during class time.
2. Go to the library.
3. Free time on your own.
4. Extra time on the computer.
5. Extra art or craft time.

## GIFT CERTIFICATES, PASSES, and COUPONS

These rewards will take some time to create and print up, but once the initial work is done, there won't be any cost or additional time spent by you. You could even allow a student to do the artwork as a reward! If you choose to offer gift certificates from local businesses, ask parent volunteers to do the legwork and bring in the prizes. Just make sure to set guidelines—a gift certificate for free ice cream or pizza is just a piece of paper, but it ends up as food.

You may also want to make sure that a family won't have to travel far or spend money in order to redeem their child's gift certificate. Many businesses offer a free admission for a child, but the parent has to pay to attend with him. This often ensures that the reward isn't actually realized.

1. Gift certificates from local businesses could include: skating, movies, bowling, video rentals, zoo, or museums.
2. Hall pass.
3. "Get Out of an Assignment Free" coupon or "Free Homework" pass.
4. "Free Tardy" pass.

## GROUP REWARDS and INCENTIVES

Encourage teamwork and mutual support among your students by giving them opportunities to earn rewards together.

1. Extra recess
2. Play a game as a class.
3. Invite a special visitor—community heroes, local authors, high school clubs or performing groups, etc.
4. Hat day or other crazy dress day—everyone gets to come to school in their pajamas.
5. Classroom free time (you can make this as supervised or limited as you like—any variation from scheduled lesson time will be seen as a treat).
6. Have a classroom party that involves games and activities rather than food.
7. If your school has special playground equipment, like parachutes or other items that aren't usually allowed during recess, check them out and allow the class to play.
8. If your school or classroom has musical instruments like recorders, cymbals, drums, and tambourines, use them to form a classroom marching band and go on parade.
9. Hold math (or other typically indoor subject) outside.
10. Turn up some music and dance.

## RESPONSIBILITY

Children love to be put in charge, or to be given extra responsibilities that indicate their maturity. Finding ways to help your students feel like “grown ups” will motivate even the most reluctant child.

1. Take messages to the office.
2. Choose an activity for the class.
3. Supervise a classroom activity.
4. Work in the lunch room.
5. Lead the class to recess or lunch.
6. Make announcements over the school intercom.
7. Feed the class pet.
8. Go into the classroom of a lower grade to help out.

## LUNCH

A word of caution: use this reward wisely—it can be interpreted as a food reward, and could contribute to a culture of eating; however, we include it here because time spent eating healthy foods with a respected person can influence the choices a child makes regarding food. In addition, people who are talking while eating tend to eat slower, which is healthier, and let's face it—you may not have time to sit down with a child and spend time with him other than at lunchtime. If you do offer this as a motivator, please encourage your students to bring healthy foods from home in a sack lunch, or choose healthy options from the school lunch offerings. Please model healthy choices in the food you eat in front of your students as well.

1. Eat lunch with a teacher.
2. Eat lunch with the principal.
3. Eat lunch with a cop or other community hero.
4. Participate in a lunch time book club, chess club, or other activity conducive to eating.

## OTHER IDEAS

1. Your photo on an “Honor” or “Classroom Hero” board.
2. Receive a note of recognition in the mail from your teacher or principal.
3. Sit with your friends during class.
4. Receive words of appreciation and respect from your teacher or principal.

## Low-Cost Ideas

Consider opening a classroom store. Children can “purchase” items from the store with pretend money they have earned as rewards, or they can build up store credit. (This is a great way to teach children about money and budgeting as well.) You can ask students and/or parents to donate small items at the beginning of the year to help stock your store. Offer guidelines—prizes that encourage physical activity, creativity, or mental stimulation are to be preferred.

Drawings are also a good way to reward and motivate. Buy a large roll of tickets to hand out to students who have accomplished good things, or simply enter the names into a jar. Collect small prize items and hold your drawing at set times during the year—once a week, once a month, or once a quarter. You can make sure each student receives a small prize, or the opportunity to be included in the drawing for a single larger item can be considered the reward. If you choose to hold a drawing for a larger, more expensive item, ask parent volunteers to do the legwork and solicit local businesses to contribute.

Contact the person in charge of your school book fair or other fund raiser. Many times the company will offer books as prizes for students, or parents can contribute to a classroom book “wish list” when they come in to shop.

If your school has a store or fundraiser selling school spirit items such as t-shirts, pencils, or water bottles, ask if they can offer you a few items for your store or drawing for free or at cost. This is another area where you can ask parents to donate.

Some other low-cost items you can have in your store or drawing include:

- Sidewalk chalk
- Crayons
- Jump ropes
- Balls
- Hats
- Frisbees
- Stickers
- Fancy soaps
- Lotions
- Jacks
- Pencils
- Erasers
- Fancy pens
- Jewelry
- Play-doh
- Water bottles
- Lanyards
- Colored markers
- Notebooks
- Glitter glue
- Paddleballs
- Key chains
- Rubber stamps
- Rulers
- Bookmarks
- Coloring books
- Lip balm
- Yo-yos
- Bubbles
- Pencil toppers
- Novelty rings (spiders)
- Card games (Old Maid, Go Fish)
- Seeds, soil, and pot for growing



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Reward and Motivate  
**Secondary-Age Students**  
Without Using Food

Older children should be beginning to learn that a job well done is a reward in itself. Material rewards have their place, but when they are overdone, they can create attitudes that will lead to disappointment later in life, when adults receive fewer tangible rewards (other than a paycheck) for their work and good behavior. Try using praise and good grades to reinforce your students' growing ability to take pride in their work and want to succeed simply for the sake of doing well.

Hold a class meeting and ask your students what motivates them—within reason, and with the guideline that food rewards will not be considered. Work to reward them in some of the ways they have specified. Follow your school's policies for teacher/student interaction for your safety and theirs.

## **No-Cost Ideas**

### **TIME**

Older children may act like adults are “uncool,” but you know that they secretly crave positive attention and the notice of authority figures. A few minutes of your time can make a significant impact on a young person's life—even to the point of influencing his chosen career path! Don't underestimate the value of your time as a reward.

1. Eat lunch together.
2. Play a game together.
3. Make an appointment to briefly speak with the student outside of class in order to praise his work or behavior and to encourage his continued efforts.

Some time rewards involve giving your student the opportunity to be on her own, or to spend time with friends.

1. Sit with friends.
2. Free time—alone or with a couple of friends
3. Spend extra time on the computer.
4. Leave class early.

## GIFT CERTIFICATES, PASSES, and COUPONS

If you choose to offer gift certificates from local businesses, ask parent volunteers to do the legwork and bring in the prizes. Just make sure to set guidelines—a gift certificate for free ice cream or pizza is just a piece of paper, but it ends up as food. Older children are more independent and can often redeem passes and gift certificates on their own, but make sure they won't have to travel far or spend additional money once they get there. This often ensures that the reward isn't actually realized.

1. Free admission to a school dance, sports event, or other event
2. Gift certificates from local businesses could include: movies, bowling, passes to the local rec. center, or video rentals.
3. Hall pass
4. "Get Out of an Assignment Free" coupon or "Free Homework" pass
5. Late homework pass
6. "Free Tardy" pass
7. Extra credit

## GROUP REWARDS and INCENTIVES

Encourage teamwork and mutual support among your students by giving them opportunities to earn rewards together. Make sure to stick with limits and requirements you set, so they will know you're serious.

1. Watch a movie.
2. Play a game as a class.
3. Invite a special visitor—community heroes, local authors or artists, performing groups, political figures such as city council members or state legislators, etc.
4. Hat day or other crazy dress day—everyone gets to come to school in their pajamas.
5. Classroom free time (you can make this as supervised or limited as you like—any variation from scheduled lesson time will be seen as a treat).
6. Have a classroom party that involves games and activities rather than food.
7. Allow music or cell phones in class.
8. Hold class outside.
9. You (or the principal) perform some silly, weird, or embarrassing feat, such as karaoke, spending the day on the roof of the school, wearing a t-shirt the class decorates, or getting a pie in the face.

If your principal is willing, try networking with other teachers to select a group of students that will get to participate in an activity outside of class as a reward. Students appreciate being taken seriously and listened to. Often, the popular or high-achieving students who serve on the student council are the only ones who have regular opportunities to make their voices heard. Creating forums for other students to speak out can be a powerful reward. A weekly, monthly, or quarterly lunch with the principal could be one way to make this happen.

## PRIVILEGES

Older children enjoy receiving privileges that indicate they can handle doing things their way, or on their own.

1. Supervise a classroom activity.
2. Leave early for lunch.
3. Listen to music (with earphones).
4. Tutor another student who is struggling.
5. Participate in a lunch time book club, chess club, or other activity conducive to eating.

## OTHER IDEAS

1. Student's photo on an "Honor" board.
2. Send a note of recognition in the mail—from you or the principal. Addressing the note to parents is also a good idea.
3. Offer words of appreciation and respect—from you or the principal.
4. Spotlight your student during school announcements.

## Low-Cost Ideas

Drawings are a good way to reward and motivate. This can be a school-wide effort, or can take place in your classroom. Create a drop box where names will be inserted—by you and/or students’ peers—for positive behavior or quality work. Collect small prize items and hold your drawing at set times during the year—once a week, once a month, or once a quarter. You can make sure each student with a name in the box receives a small prize, or the opportunity to be included in the drawing for a single larger item can be considered the reward. If you choose to hold a drawing for a larger, more expensive item, ask parent volunteers to do the legwork and solicit local businesses to contribute. Offer guidelines—prizes that encourage physical activity, creativity, or mental stimulation are to be preferred.

Contact the person in charge of your school book fair or other fund raiser. Many times the company will offer books as prizes for students, or parents can contribute to a classroom book “wish list” when they come in to shop.

If your school has a store or fundraiser selling school spirit items such as t-shirts, pencils, or water bottles, ask if they can offer you a few items for your store or drawing for free or at cost. This is another area where you can ask parents to donate.

You Can Do It!

Rewarding and Motivating  
**Children at Home**

## Note to Parents

From potty training to making sure the homework gets done, you are the main educator of your child. It's a huge responsibility, and a fast-paced lifestyle doesn't help you get it all done. Parenting can be overwhelming, but with patience, time, and a little creativity, your relationship with your child can be rewarding and enjoyable.

If you choose to purchase small reward items for your children, make sure they are appropriate for the behavior you are trying to motivate. Remember that you are raising future adults who will need to be able to perform in the workplace and maintain personal relationships without expecting too much—although they will be able to expect a paycheck—very few people are motivated to work for nothing. Offering a trip to the zoo to a child for completing small tasks that are routine and expected may be considered excessive, unless your child has a disability or disorder that makes accomplishing those tasks particularly difficult. Consider your child's overall needs as opposed to offering increasingly grand incentives in order to motivate him, in order to ensure your ability to provide long term, consistent practices that will benefit everyone.

Consider creating a star or points chart for your child. This can work well for both younger children and teens. Your child is rewarded with stars or points for positive behaviors, and works toward a predetermined goal over time. For example, you might decide, with your child, that you will take her to a movie when she accumulates 50 stars for doing homework daily. You could offer points for all positive behavior—from cleaning her room to entering daily homework assignments in her planner. Discuss boundaries and expectations, and allow her to add to the chart each time she succeeds. Once she reaches the goal, she receives the reward. A chart with a deadline is another option. Set a reasonable date by which you'd like to see the goal accomplished, and determine the number of stars or points your child must have in order to receive the reward. Remember that no one's perfect—decide on a percentage that you're comfortable with, say 85 or 90 percent, and reward her if she's close enough when the deadline arrives.

If your child is in school, please talk with his teachers and share your philosophy with them. Ask them specifically to avoid food rewards. Work together with educators

If you need help developing your family rewards philosophy, you may want to check out a couple of Web sites. There are as many sites as there are parenting styles, so keep looking until you find one that feels right for you and your family. Here are a couple to get you started:

<http://www.brainsarefun.com/Rewards.html>

[http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/living/2003436164\\_grades18.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/living/2003436164_grades18.html)



You Can Do It!

Reward and Motivate  
**Young Children**  
Without Using Food

## No-Cost Ideas

### TIME

1. Take a trip to the library.
2. Take a bike ride with one or both parents.
3. Read your child's favorite book aloud
4. Listen to your child read aloud.
5. Play your child's favorite game.
6. Play catch.
7. Shoot hoops.
8. Snuggle together before bedtime.
9. Take a walk together.
10. Call a grandparent or other loved one on the phone.
11. Take a trip to the park.
12. Have a friend over to play.
13. Play dress-up.

### PRAISE

Children often hear parents telling them what they're doing wrong, but how often do your children hear words of encouragement and praise from you? Here are a few reminders of everyday words your child needs to hear:

- Please
- Thank you
- Great job!
- Compliment your child in front of others.
- I love you!

Positive facial expressions and touch are also highly effective forms of praise and encouragement. Make sure your child sees you smile at him often. Hug and touch him. Give him "high fives" or the "thumbs up" sign. Your child will be motivated to do almost anything in order to hear and feel your love for him.

## COUPONS

Make a coupon book with a variety of rewards that your child can choose from. You could make it together, allowing your child to choose some of the rewards that she would prefer to receive. Set limits regarding cost—all of the activities or rewards must be free, for example, or at least half must be free, the other half must be under \$10—whatever you choose. Try to avoid rewarding with very expensive items such as a bike or a video game system. Your child should begin to learn that working hard and doing a job well is its own reward. If you like, your coupon book could contain one large ticket item to work toward, with smaller rewards along the way. Coupons could be for any of the ideas included under the other headings in this section.

## RESPONSIBILITY and PRIVILEGES

1. Stay up late.
2. Extra TV time (use this reward sparingly—an extra ten minutes is enough for younger children).
3. Receive a “get out of after-dinner cleanup free” card or similar opportunity to get out of a chore one time.

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Play a team sport like soccer or baseball. Modify the rules to fit your family’s size and range of abilities.
2. Play a board game together.
3. Discuss one child’s accomplishment at the dinner table. If you’re afraid some family members won’t get into the spirit of the celebration, coach them ahead of time. Make sure you reciprocate by celebrating other family members later, when they do something good.
4. Have a special place setting at the table for the child you’re rewarding. Use a special plate, glass, or place mat.
5. Ask family members to express congratulations and love to the child that’s being rewarded. Have an “Appreciation Day” where your child gets to choose his favorite meal, family activity, etc. Family members can offer to serve your child in different ways that will make him feel special.

## SERVICE

Young children love to help out—in the home or community. You and your child will benefit in many ways by using the opportunity to serve others as a motivator.

1. Bake bread or another healthy treat to take to a neighbor or teacher.
2. Take vegetables from your garden to a neighbor or teacher.
3. Make a greeting card to send to a grandparent or other loved one.
4. Make a thank you card for a teacher or someone who has rendered service to your child or family.
5. Help make dinner for the family.
6. Teach your child to perform a new chore or task that she doesn't regularly do. Allow her to complete the chore on her own.

## Low-Cost Ideas

1. Allow your child to choose a craft. Do it together.
2. Take a trip to the zoo.
3. Take a trip to the pool.
4. Subscribe to an educational or creative magazine or purchase a current copy. Do one or more activities together or read an article together.
5. Go to the movies together.
6. Go on a “date” with Mom or Dad. Allow your child to choose the activity.
7. Choose an item from a “treat box” or list of toys, books, etc. that you have available.

Take your child’s individual needs into consideration when planning the rewards and incentives you will offer. When possible, spend time with your child using the item you give her. This will make the reward all the more valuable and memorable to her. Some small items you may consider purchasing are:

- Stickers
- Books
- Legos, blocks, or other toy that inspires creativity
- Modeling clay
- Character socks or underpants
- Coloring books and crayons
- Sidewalk chalk
- Bath toys
- Add to your child’s collection (stamps, rocks, etc.)
- Craft items
- Money



You Can Do It!

Reward and Motivate  
**Older Children and Teens**  
Without Using Food

## No-Cost Ideas

### TIME

1. Touch your child. Teens typically don't get as much physical contact as younger children do, but they still need it. Don't withhold hugs and positive touch or reserve them exclusively for rewards, but remember that one great way to show your teen you're proud of him is to give him the gift of human touch. If your teen rebuffs your efforts to hug him, any positive touch will do. A quick shoulder rub or gentle pressure on the arm or hand will get the same message across.
2. Use sincere words of appreciation with no strings attached. Teens thrive on praise.
  - "I knew you could do it!"
  - "You're awesome!"
  - "I'm impressed!"
  - Sometimes, a simple "Thanks!" is all it takes to make a teen feel valued.

Make sure your words of praise are never followed up with negative or qualifying comments. "You did a great job . . . *but* . . ." No one's perfect. Praise the positive in what your child did, and let the rest go, or bring it up at a different time.

3. Offer to spend time helping your child out with something that's coming up once they've shown they have what it takes to get a project done on their own. "I can see that you worked really hard to get that done. What can I do to help with your next project?" You might offer to help him clean his room or perform some other chore that needs to be done. If you plan to do this, make sure you can commit to ensuring the time you spend together is positive and fun.
4. Make your child's favorite meal. Invite the family to eat together, and discuss her success at the table.
5. Free up your schedule and ask your child to choose an activity you can do together. Be prepared to play video games or watch a movie you might not otherwise choose.
6. Write your child a note or letter expressing your feelings for him, and congratulating him on a job well done.

## RESPONSIBILITY and PRIVILEGES

It's okay to attach meaning to allowing your child privileges. Make sure he knows that the reason he is being allowed to take on extra responsibility, or enjoy certain privileges is because he behaved responsibly or did well with some previous effort.

1. Stay out late with friends. You might offer an After-Curfew coupon that she can use on a special night, such as Prom.
2. Use the car.
3. Attend extra-curricular school activities, such as sports events or clubs.
4. Stay up late after parents have gone to bed—be responsible for making sure lights are off and doors are locked (make sure you set appropriate limits on what your child may do with his time alone).
5. Extra time on the computer.
6. Allow her to make an upcoming important decision on her own.
7. Allow him to sleep in one morning.
8. Ask your teen to help you choose the next family activity, or enlist her help in planning a family vacation.
9. Get out of a chore. (Use this only occasionally.)

## Low-Cost Ideas

Spending money on a reward should only be for special occasions—when your teen has done something extraordinary. Remember, your teen should now be learning to succeed for the sake of success, and to appreciate the value of hard work. Too many rewards for things she is expected to do can lead to problems later in life. Talk to her about what she might see as a worthwhile incentive, and negotiate together on how to carry the reward out. Remember, you can have a more positive influence on your teen if he doesn't already have everything he wants. For example, it's hard to give extra privileges and rewards if he already has his own car and spending money. (If your teen does have a car, make sure you retain the right to revoke driving privileges. The same goes for cell phones and other expensive “toys.”)

1. Extra cell phone minutes or text messages
2. Dinner or a movie out with a friend
3. A date with Dad or Mom—or both
4. Gift certificate in modest amounts
5. Books
6. Music
7. Contribute to an existing collection, such as sports memorabilia.
8. Add a small element to his room décor, or help him rearrange his room.
9. A new outfit
10. Contribute to a college savings fund or other savings account.  
You might offer to match or contribute to funds that she is saving to make a purchase.
11. Offer an opportunity to make some spending money—on a job that isn't normally required.

And now, there's nothing left but to go out and reward your child—and remember: you *can* do it!

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- 4 Clemson County Cooperative Extension Service. *Non-Food Rewards for Kids*. 2007.

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<http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/HGIC4110.htm>

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- 6 *ibid.*



Parents and teachers alike are looking for new ways to motivate children without food in a society and culture where treats are given out like . . . well, candy! This resource will help you get started as you work to help kids realize their potential and develop good habits for life, while remaining true to principles of good health.

Former Utah PTA Health Commissioner Leslie Dalton, with help from PTA leaders from all over Utah, delivers a guide that will spark your creativity in rewarding kids of all ages, both at home and at school.

