

Behavioral Contracts

Choose one or a small number (≤ 5) of behaviors to address.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In most cases, group "substance use" as a single behavior
Set clear expectations that your child(ren) does not have permission to use substances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use clear language, avoid euphemisms or generalizations: "You do not have my/our permission to use alcohol/marijuana/nicotine/etc."
Be clear that substance use is NOT ALLOWED in the house.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider regular room checks; invite your child to be present (to confirm that you will not be violating personal space) Discard any drugs or paraphernalia found in the house or among personal belongings
Select rewards that are acceptable to you and meaningful to your child (if your child has some say in the rewards, s/he will likely buy in to the contract concept more readily)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going out with friends Curfew Sleepovers Small gifts (sporting equipment, video games, special clothes, etc.) Dinner at their favorite restaurant/fast food chain Their favorite meal at home Driving or learning to drive Special events (parties, trips) Lessons or tuition Money saved (by you) towards a larger purchase
Use urine drug testing to monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See separate guidance
Establish positive rewards for each week without use. (Use shorter time periods and smaller, more frequent rewards for teens who have very frequent use.)	<p>For Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First week: permission to spend an hour with friends after school Second week: permission to go out on Saturday evening, curfew set to 9 pm Third week: curfew extended to 10 pm Etc.
If use occurs during the contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reset to baseline

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Ensure rewards are given if a contingency is met. Your child will become de-motivated to pursue behavioral change if his/her efforts are not acknowledged and rewarded as agreed to.

- Avoid piling on such as
 - “We are resetting your curfew even though your drug test was negative because you failed a math test.”
- Ignore behavior that is not critical, even if annoying such as
 - Messy room
 - Clothing choices
 - Hair styles
 - Diet/fast food consumption (within reason)

Sample positive rewards. Remember, positive rewards are much more effective at shaping behavior than negative consequences.

- **Praise**
 - “I’m so proud of you for ____”
 - “I see you working hard on school, great job!”
 - “Thanks for doing ____ . It’s great to have your help around the house!”
 - “Thanks for telling me your plans; I like to know where you will be.”
- **Small treats.**
 - Spa/bath products
 - Chocolate or candy or cookies
 - Iced coffee at Dunkin Donuts
 - \$1 into an “account” that can be used later
 - Favorite dinner
- **Bigger treats and everyday privileges**
 - trip to salon/barber
 - meal out at a favorite restaurant
 - phone case/ear buds
 - sporting goods
 - clothing item (tee shirt, sweatshirt)
 - tickets to a sporting event/concert
 - Periods of unrestricted cell phone time
 - Having a friend visit your home
 - Visiting a friend’s home
 - Going out with a friend
 - Sleepovers
 - Driving (only after 3 negative drug tests and with a commitment to abstinence)

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Below are examples of **negative consequences** in the order of effectiveness. Aim to use natural consequences whenever possible and logical consequences when natural consequences are too risky. Minimize use of punishment.

- **Natural Consequences.** Avoid “rescuing” your teen from their bad decisions. Natural consequences are generally the most effective negative consequences, though parents should make sure that potential consequences are not too severe or long lasting before allowing them to occur. For example:
 - Not doing homework or poorly managing time for big assignments. Allow your child to experience a bad grade and support the teacher’s discipline.
 - Not getting to school on time. Support the school’s disciplinary action (detentions or extra assignments).
 - Not doing their laundry. Allow your child to deal with dirty clothes.
- **Logical consequences.** When natural consequences are too risky or dangerous, or otherwise ineffective, intervene by inserting logical consequences. Some examples are below.
 - Staying out past curfew, or being dishonest about whereabouts. Suspend going out privileges for 1 week.
 - If you find alcohol, drugs or paraphernalia in the car, suspend driving privileges until three negative drug tests have been obtained.
 - Using a cell phone to buy or sell drugs. Suspend cell phone privileges and return them slowly in a monitored fashion.
- **Punishments.** Parents may choose to implement punishments when neither natural nor logical consequences are practical.
 - Using substances in the house. Suspend allowance for 1 week.
 - Disrespectful or rude behavior. Extra chores for one week.
 - Property damage. Suspend going out privileges for 1 week.

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