

USE **NON-FOOD** REWARDS

Don't underestimate the power of using verbal praise that is specific with kids of all ages. For example, "You did a great job, John. I'm so proud of you for helping Jack with his math problems today."

Rewarding kids with food, even healthy food, encourages kids to eat when they may not be hungry and can lead to poor eating habits. There are plenty of ways to reward kids without using food. Use some of the ideas on this page for younger kids, and look on the back for non-food rewards for older kids.

Alternatives to Food as a Reward for Younger Children

- Share a special item or talent with the group.
- Be "Super Kid of the Day" or "Star of the Day."
- Sit in a special seat during snack or mealtime.
- Be recognized in a newsletter or on a bulletin board.
- Get a signed t-shirt, Frisbee, or ball.
- Lead group activities.
- Receive coupons for special privileges.
- Receive a positive note from the program staff or director, or have one sent home for parents to see.
- Attend a reading party (kids bring blankets to sit on and read favorite books).
- Read a favorite poem.
- Share a favorite picture of a family member or friend.
- Play a favorite game or puzzle.
- Eat snack outdoors or have a picnic.



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- Take a walk with a teacher or a favorite staff member.
- Dance to favorite music.
- Receive a trophy or ribbon.
- Get access to items that can only be used on special occasions (e.g. special art supplies, toys, or games).
- Select an item from a treasure chest full of small, non-food items (e.g. bubbles, crayons, finger puppets, Slinkys, yo-yos, rubber balls, spinning tops, stickers, school supplies, etc.).
- Make a list of fun, non-food rewards and choose a reward from the list when appropriate.

Alternatives to Food as a Reward for Older Kids

- Receive a positive note from the program staff or director.
- Be entered into a drawing for donated prizes.
- Win tickets to special events (e.g. sports games, dances, concerts, etc.).
- Earn points or play money for privileges.
- Earn certificates for music downloads.
- Choose brain teasers or games for the group to play.
- Earn sports equipment or athletic gear (e.g. Frisbees, water bottles, head or wrist sweat bands, NERF balls, etc.).

Benefits of providing non-food rewards:

- Creates an environment that fosters healthy eating and supports the 5-2-1-0 message.
- Allows the opportunity for more frequent rewards.
- Adds to fitness if physical activity is used as reward.

