



# Use Rewards and Special Interests to Motivate and Engage in Learning

Rewards are an important element of all teaching programmes. Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) need to understand the functionality of learning and have a motivator to learn. Self motivation is very difficult for someone with ASD especially when they can't see the 'payoff' at the end. Having a special goal to work towards is often the best motivator.

## The goal:

- Must be easy to reach.
- Should be small achievable steps rather than one huge step.
- Needs to have meaning to the ASD individual.
- Should be very clear what is expected, remember these children are literal so need specific clear expectations. i.e. Avoid goals like "do work" instead say "1 page of work; 10 questions; 100 words; read 10 pages".

## Ideas to try:

Use a motivator as a:

- Reward for work completed.
- Reward for time on task.
- Down time/quiet time.

The most useful motivator is usually access to their special interest/obsession. For some children their special interests can change daily, others can have the same interest for years.

Special interests can be used in many ways. Here are some examples on how to use special interests:

- Reading about favourite subject/special interest.
- Talking about favourite subject (this must be time limited).
- Access to favourite internet site/YouTube/iPad.

Children with ASD often cannot be bothered with skills they do not see the functionality to do and can take the attitude 'why bother'. By using their interests for learning or rewarding with their interests you will increase engagement and participation.

## Word of warning: NEVER use a child's special interest as a punishment

If you take away their special interest and use it as a punishment it rarely works as a behaviour modification method and could result in escalating behaviours. It is better to use as a reward, e.g. when you have achieved x, you can have y.

My Name is .....

Now

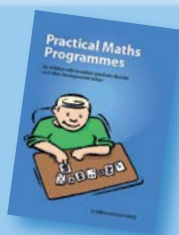
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Later

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Practical Maths Programmes

By Jo Adkins and Sue Larkey



### The Ultimate Guide to School and Home

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans



### Teacher Assistants Big Red Book of Ideas

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans

