

# Alternatives to Using Food as a Reward



Teachers, administration, parents, and the community often offer kids food as a reward for “good” behavior. Typically “food rewards” have little or no nutritional value but are used because they are easy, inexpensive treats that are thought to bring about short-term behavior change. **Teachers and staff are encouraged to reward students with non-food items.**

## Disadvantages of Using Food as a Reward

- It sends a mixed message between nutrition education taught in the classroom and the school environment
- It encourages over-consumption of foods high in added sugar and fat
- It may displace more nutritious foods offered in the school meal program or in lunches
- It teaches children to eat when they are not hungry to reward themselves

## Free Alternatives

Verbal praise  
Recognize over announcements  
Sit at the teacher’s desk  
Sit by friends  
Take a walk with teacher or principal  
Eat lunch with the teacher or principal  
Make a delivery to the office  
Be the classroom helper  
No homework pass  
Teach class or help teacher teach  
Read or eat lunch outside  
Read to a younger class  
Extra recess time  
Class walking break  
Listen/dance to music  
Note of recognition from teacher/principal  
Free choice time  
Game day  
Listen to a book on tape  
Extra computer time  
Play a game  
Teacher reads a special book to the class  
Read morning announcements  
Go to library to select a book to read  
Design a class/school bulletin board  
Photo recognition board  
Walking field trip

## Low-Cost Alternatives

Books  
Bookmarks  
Pencils, pens, and erasers  
Notepads/notebooks  
Trophy, plaque, ribbon, certificate  
Stickers  
Sidewalk chalk  
Movie/Video coupons  
Pedometers  
Drawing for donated prizes  
Stencils  
Stamps  
Trip to the “treasure box”  
Coloring books  
Art supplies  
Rulers  
Glitter  
Gift certificate to a bookstore  
Pass to zoo, aquarium, museum  
Paddleballs, Frisbees, hula hoops,  
or jump ropes  
Water bottles  
Toys/trinkets (like yo-yos)  
Key chains  
Plant, seeds & a pot for growing  
Point/token system for privileges or  
prizes