



FIGURE 2.9 Example of a token chart

I want to remember to take things home!	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week #1				No school	
Week #2		i forgot!			

- Tokens are a means to an end, not the end. They are *merely* a way to remind adults to give a child feedback for her efforts to live within limits, to act responsibly, and to be a productive group member. Tokens are gimmicks, and the stickers or photos must be combined with social reinforcement. Tokens must be used *ethically*.
- Figure 2.9 shows a chart that Mr. Russo used to help Nick remember routine tasks. Mr. Russo encouraged Nick to decide how to mark each day’s space, and he *decided* to use different ink stamps each day.
- What if a child forgets to perform the agreed-upon behavior? After the first week, Mr. Russo reviewed with Nick the things that were helping him remember. Nick forgot to take some items home on Tuesday, Week 2. Mr. Russo said on Wednesday morning, “You know, you’ve remembered every other day so far. You can go back to stamping tomorrow.” Mr. Russo did *not* take away any stampings for the other days as punishment for forgetting. Ethically and competently done token systems or charts focus on teaching, not on punishing.
- Fading out using a token chart. Mr. Russo faded out using the chart. All along, he had made brief comments acknowledging Nick’s effort to remember. This social encouragement or reinforcer, combined with the token (Nick’s stamping), was what Mr. Russo needed to do to really help Nick. The chart was a good way to remind the teacher how he interacted with Nick in this case. Like Vygotsky, social learning theorists believe that adults can help children learn appropriate behaviors through adult–child talking. The tokens are merely reminders that the adult needs to do his part.

Use Encouragement: A Form of Acknowledgment

Praise

A form of intangible feedback for children.

You need to know that using *praise* is a controversial topic in ECE. As early childhood educators we raise some legitimate questions about using *praise*. Praise is an *intangible* form of reinforcement—it is not a thing that we can see. Praise can be used quite *ineffectively*. Some adults think that they can manipulate children with praise. Others think that praise is a good form of encouragement.

Teachers should consider using *encouragement* rather than praise. Here are some guidelines for encouraging children instead of praising them.

- Be specific, descriptive, and appreciative but not gushy or mushy. Notice and then describe specifically what a child did. Describe what you saw, heard, tasted, or touched. Relate the praise directly to the event. Avoid judging aspects such as the child’s actions or character. Let the child know that you appreciate what she has done.

EXAMPLE Mrs. Sandal said to her preschool class, which had gathered for large-group time and singing: “Thanks for putting your blocks and puzzles and playdough away today. Our classroom looks very neat and tidy!”