

The Home Point System

When trying to manage the behavior of a defiant teen, it is common to find that praise is not enough to motivate the teen to do chores, follow rules, or to obey commands. As a result, it is necessary to set up a more powerful program to motivate the teen. One such program that has been very successful with younger teens (ages 12 through 14 or 15 years old) is the home point system. Your therapist will explain in detail how to set up such a program, but here are the steps to follow.

1. Get a notebook, and set it up like a checkbook with five columns, one each for the date, the item, deposits, withdrawals, and the running balance (or actually use a checkbook with only the register portion placed in it). When the teen is rewarded with points, write the job under "item" and enter the amount as a "deposit." Add it to the teen's balance. When the teen "buys" a privilege with his points, note the privilege under "item," place this amount in the withdrawal column, and deduct this amount from the "balance."
2. Make up a list of rewards and privileges. These should include not only occasional special privileges (going to the movies, buying a CD, having a party) but also the everyday privileges the teen takes for granted (TV, video games, use of the telephone, etc.). Your therapist will explain what types of privileges you might include on this list. Be sure to have at least 10, half to two thirds of which should be daily privileges.
3. Now make a second list that will contain the jobs and chores you often ask the teen to perform. These can be typical household chores such as making the bed, washing dishes, putting dirty laundry in the hamper, or emptying the trash. Also put on the list things like getting dressed for school, being in bed by a certain time, getting up for school on time, brushing teeth, or any other self-help task the teen has trouble with. Your therapist can help you decide what types of jobs to put on this list.
4. Next, take each job or chore and decide how much you feel it is worth in points. Use a range of 100 to 1,000 points, and remember, the harder the job, the more points it is worth.
5. Add up approximately how many points you think your teen will earn in a typical day if he/she does most of these jobs. Then, remembering this number, decide how many points your teen should have to pay for each of the privileges you listed. We generally suggest that one half to two thirds of the teen's daily points should be spent on typical daily privileges. This allows the teen to save about one third of his points every day toward the purchase of some of the very special rewards on the list. Don't worry too much about the exact numbers to use here. Just use your judgment as to how much each reward should cost; be fair, and charge more points for the special rewards and less for the daily ones.
6. Be sure to explain the system to the teen before getting started. If the teen expresses resistance, tell him that he will have a chance to earn bonus points when chores are performed in a prompt and pleasant manner. You will not give these bonus points all the time but should give them when your teen has done a job in an especially pleasant and prompt manner.
7. Be sure to tell the teen that points will only be given for jobs that are done on the first request. If you have to repeat a command, the teen will not receive any points for doing it.

(continued)

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Note: **Do not take points away this week for noncompliance with requests on the list.** After 1 week of earning points, your therapist will explain how to use penalties—points that are deducted when the teen does not comply on the first request or when the teen violates a common household rule.

OTHER REMINDERS

- Only parents are to write in the point notebook or checkbook register.
- Review the list of privileges and rewards every week or so and add new ones as you deem necessary. Check with your teen for new rewards he/she may want on the list.
- You can reward your teen with bonus points for almost any form of good behavior.
- The teen must have a sufficient number of points in his/her balance in order to purchase a privilege. No credit card mentality!
- Do not give the points before the teen has done what he was told to do, only afterward. Try to do so immediately.