



Non Food Rewards For Young Children



Food is a source of nourishment. Ellyn Satter (<http://ellynsatterinstitute.org/>) recommends that children should decide whether to and how much to eat, so that children eat when hungry and stop eating when full. Parents are encouraged to follow their children’s hunger and fullness cues. Food should not be used as a reward or to comfort children that are upset. Similarly, don’t withhold food to punish a child. When food is used in these ways, this can start an eating pattern for children that will continue on later in life. Parents and caregivers should help their children learn other methods for comfort and reward such as those listed below.

This handout provides alternatives to food rewards that teachers or parents may decide to use to encourage positive behaviour. Children may also have ideas for alternative rewards.

No Cost Alternatives	Low Cost Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive attention, praise or thanks • Sit by friends • Go first in line ups • Be the teacher’s assistant or parent helper • Play outside • Play a favourite game or puzzle • Watch a song, dance, or skit performed by an adult or other students • Read a book together • Choose an activity, e.g., walking to the library or having a picnic in the park • Plant a garden outside or in a container 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notepad/notebook, crayons, markers or paint • Sticker or stamp • Ribbon, certificate or card with a positive message, e.g., “Great job!” • Bookmark • Book or colouring book • Hair accessories, shoe laces • Ball • Puzzle or game • Playing cards • Small, soft toothbrush • Crazy straw for water or milk • Bubbles • A plant or seeds and a pot for growing a plant • Treasure box of non-food items for children to choose from • Photo recognition board displayed in a place everyone can see

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