

Reinforcer Inventory & Preference Assessment

Find out what actually motivates a student — before you build a behavior plan around a reward they do not care about.

Why this comes first: a behavior plan fails when the reinforcer is chosen by an adult instead of identified from the student. Run this at the start of the year and again any time a plan stops working.

STUDENT	DATE	COMPLETED BY	ROLE
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PART 1 — STAFF / CAREGIVER CHECKLIST

CATEGORY	OPTIONS (circle what applies)	RANK 1–5
EDIBLE	crackers · fruit · pretzels · juice · other: _____	
SENSORY	fidget · putty · vibration · music · weighted lap pad · other: _____	
ACTIVITY	iPad · drawing · puzzles · blocks · walk · errand · other: _____	
SOCIAL	high five · praise · time with a preferred adult · time with a peer · other: _____	
TANGIBLE	sticker · token · small toy · trading card · other: _____	
ESCAPE	break card · shorter task · skip one item · finish early · other: _____	

Rank **1 = most motivating**. Ranking matters more than the list — a student who likes twelve things equally has no strong reinforcer, and the plan needs a different approach.

Part 2 — Student Version

Read aloud or offer as pictures. Accept any communication mode — pointing counts.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE?

What do you like to do when you finish your work?

What is your favorite thing in this classroom?

Who do you like to spend time with at school?

What is something you would work extra hard to earn?

What is something you do NOT like? (just as important)

FORCED-CHOICE TRIALS (offer two, record which was chosen)

TRIAL	OPTION A	OPTION B	CHOSE	HOW LONG THEY ENGAGED

Part 3 — Preference Hierarchy & How to Use It

FINAL RANKING — TOP 5 REINFORCERS

RANK	REINFORCER	USE FOR	HOW OFTEN	SATIATES AFTER
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Save the strongest reinforcer for the hardest task

If the top reinforcer is available all day for easy work, it will not be worth anything during the task the student actually avoids. Reserve rank 1 for the hardest demand.

Watch for satiation

Almost every reinforcer stops working if it is used too often. That is why the inventory asks how long it takes to satiate — rotate before the plan stops working, not after.

Re-run this a few times a year

Preferences change, especially for younger students. A reinforcer that worked in September is often worthless by February, and teams frequently blame the behavior plan instead of the reward.

Feed it into the BIP

The reinforcement section of a Behavior Intervention Plan should name a specific reinforcer from this hierarchy and a schedule — not the phrase "provide positive reinforcement."

Tired of rebuilding these forms every year?

IEP Goal Writer saves each student's profile once, then generates goals, PLAAFPs, progress notes, and parent updates from the same data — free to try at iepgoalwriter.pro

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