

Good Behavior Game

Goals of the Good Behavior Game: To reduce general classroom disruption, aggression, and shyness of students.

General Description of the Good Behavior Game:

By engaging in desired behaviors, student teams compete for prizes, privileges, and special activities.

The teacher initially divides the class into three or four teams, each with an equal proportion of boys and girls, and disruptive versus well-behaved students.

Before the game, classroom rules (desired behaviors) are described and modeled to the students.

During the game, desired behaviors are frequently praised.

Check marks are recorded on the board for a team when disruptive behavior of any team member occurs.

- If the total check marks for a team remain below a pre-set number (e.g., 4) by the end of the game, the team wins.
- All teams may win if their check marks do not exceed the pre-set number (e.g., 4).
- Consistently winning teams also receive bigger rewards at the end of the week.

The game is played for ten minutes three times a week early in the year, gradually extended in time, and eventually incorporated into the whole day and entire week.

Preparing for the First Week of the Good Behavior Game:

- Good Behavior Game rules are posted in a central location
- Classroom rules are posted in a central location with clear definitions of disruptive (unacceptable) behavior:

Sample Rule - "Work quietly."

Disruptive Behavior: Talking or verbal disruption - talking without being permitted by the teacher, whistling, humming, singing, yelling, drumming on the desk, tapping the pencil or other items, or making other sounds.

Sample Rule - "Be polite to others."

Disruptive Behavior: Aggression or physical disruption - physical contacts, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, making someone stumble, hair pulling, pinching, throwing objects, pencil fighting, intentional pencil breaking, taking or destroying property of others.

Sample Rule - "Get out of our seats only with permission."

Disruptive Behavior: Out-of-Seat - getting out of the seat without permission. Includes standing up, jumping, or walking around the room.

Sample Rule - "Follow directions."

Disruptive Behavior: Non-compliance - breaking rules, disobeying the teacher.

- Winner Scoreboard is posted in a central location on a whiteboard, chart paper, magnetic board, etc. (see sample below)

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	WEEKLY WINNER
TEAM 1						
TEAM 2						
TEAM 3						

- Student booklets are prepared and copied for each student (optional – these booklets include a list of the game rules, the classroom rules, and a place where the teacher can place stamps for winning the game)
- Stamper is available for student booklets (optional)
- Daily and Weekly Rewards are identified and gathered (begin with tangibles, such as trinkets, snacks, etc.)
- Timer or clock is available
- Teams are formed. The teacher assigns each student in the class to a team, making sure that the teams contain equal numbers (proportion) of:
 - boys and girls

- well-behaved students
- socially isolated or shy students
- “troublemakers” and aggressive, disruptive students.

Initially, there should be 3-4 teams for each classroom.

Each team is assigned a team leader who will be in charge of handing out prizes, managing the Scoreboard, and helping the teacher with activities for his/her winning team. The teacher should choose a shy or withdrawn student as the leader for each team (without saying why the student was selected). Research indicates that when a particular student becomes repeatedly associated with reinforcement, her/his social standing with other students will be enhanced such that s/he will be approached by other students for play.

If there are no students with shy or withdrawn behavior in the classroom, the team leader may be any student of the teacher's choosing. Also, team leadership may be frequently alternated as an extra reward for students with good behavior.

If a newly formed team accidentally contains too many “troublemakers,” they can be separated out into a new team, or team members can be rearranged so that an equal number of disruptive students is on each team.

- Team member lists are posted on the whiteboard (see sample below)
 - TEAM 1: (List names of team leader and members)
 - TEAM 2: (List names of team leader and members)
 - TEAM 3: (List names of team leader and members)
 - TEAM 4: (List names of team leader and members)

Day 1:

On the first day during any subject lesson, the teacher:

- hands out Good Behavior Game booklets (optional)
- announces that the class will play a "game" for 10 minutes
- announces the members of each team
- reads the game rules and the classroom rules, and definitions of disruptive behaviors
- explains that each rule violation, (that is, occurrence of a disruptive behavior) will result in writing a check mark on the board next to the team to which the offending student belongs. Then, the teacher will verbally identify the misbehaving student and neutrally describe the behavior which earned the check mark.
- explains that any team with 4 marks or fewer at the end of 10 minutes wins the game, and that all teams can win if they all earn 4 marks or fewer.
- explains that the winning team(s) will:
 - get a happy face stamped into their booklets (optional)

- have a star (or other symbol) placed on the Winner Scoreboard at the end of the game.
 - get a prize, immediately following the game.
- sets the timer for 10 minutes and announces the beginning of the game.

During the game,

- desired behaviors are frequently praised. The ratio of praise statements should exceed check marks by 10-to-1.
- as soon as a disruptive behavior occurs, the teacher stops whatever he/she is saying or doing and puts a check mark on the board; the teacher should also:
 - briefly state what the wrong behavior was in a normal tone of voice and with no facial expression
 - identify the student who did it
 - praise the other teams for behaving well

It is critical to stick to the game rules when giving check marks. For example, getting arithmetic problems right is not one of the game conduct rules, and teams should not earn check marks for poor academic performance.

At the end of 10 minutes when the timer goes off, the teacher should:

- review with the class the number of check marks per team
- repeat the 4-point or less criterion for winning the game
- announce the winning team (or teams)
- immediately stamp the winning booklets (optional). (Mark "absent" if applicable, for later record keeping).
- direct the Team Leader to:
 - put up, draw, paste or otherwise place a star (or other symbol) on the Winner Scoreboard
 - hand out prizes to the students in the winning teams

Students on the losing team(s) should do quiet seat-work with no special attention from the teacher.

Day 2 (and onward):

The game should be conducted the same as day 1 with the addition that the teacher should:

- erase the previous day's check marks from the whiteboard before the students arrive
- announce that the students will be playing the game on some (or all) days for the rest of the week
- announce that the class will again play the Good Behavior Game for 10 minutes

- announce that the teams are the same as the day before
- review the classroom rules
- review the four points or less rule for winning the game
- announce that the team(s) that win the game most often will be the Weekly Winner(s)
- announce that the Weekly Winners will be awarded an “extra special privilege.”

At the end of each week:

- The Weekly Winner Team(s) will get a giant star (or other symbol) at the far right side of the Winner Scoreboard. All team members will get an “extra special privilege,” (e.g., outside playtime, watch a video, popcorn party).
- Non-winners should engage in quiet seat-work with no special attention from the teacher.

Continuing and Modifying the Good Behavior Game after the First Week:

On the first day of Week 2, the teacher together with the class should review their progress, and ask their opinions about the game. At this point, the students in the class should suggest or choose a special privilege for Weekly Winners that week. This gives all the students a long-term goal to work toward.

The following changes to the game may occur based on how the students are progressing:

- Change from tangible to intangible rewards: In the early weeks of the game the teacher should begin with tangible rewards that are distributed immediately following the game. When all teams are winning consistently, begin to include intangible rewards (e.g., tokens).
- Lengthen game time: When all teams win consistently with the tangible and intangible rewards, then the teacher should start lengthening the time the game is played.
- Alter the reward delivery time: When all teams are winning consistently with a longer game time, the teacher should begin altering the reward delivery time. For example, if the game is played from 9:00 am to 10:00 am, the students should be told at the end of the game that rewards will be distributed after lunch.
- Play the game early and distribute rewards late in the day: When the teams continue winning consistently, the teacher may play the game early in the morning and distribute rewards at the end of the school day.
- Play the game at different times of the day, during different activities, and even in different locations, (e.g., the hallway, walking to the cafeteria, or in the auditorium).

Troubleshooting - If All Teams are Not Winning Consistently:

If all teams are not winning consistently, you may need to:

- rearrange team membership (e.g., to redistribute disruptive students)
- form a new team (This may help when several students are consistently responsible for a team losing. Avoid making it appear to be a good thing or a privilege to be moved to a new team. Explain calmly that they are being moved so that their team can win, and they must remain on the new team until they win for 3 consecutive games. After winning 3 consecutive games, the students may return to their previous teams.)
- try new rewards
- change the reward delivery time (e.g., give tangible rewards immediately following the game)
- shorten the game time
- change the game time.

Ask for consultation from someone with experience using group-oriented behavioral strategies, such as the Good Behavior Game. You may also ask for time during faculty or other team meetings to discuss the Good Behavior Game.

Record keeping:

Teachers may keep a running record of team memberships, team leaders, checkmarks earned, daily rewards earned, weekly rewards suggested and earned, etc.

Teachers may also desire to gather baseline data before the game actually begins. Data gathered after the game begins can be compared to evaluate and show classroom progress.

Precautions:

Beware of “scapegoating” when a student repeatedly causes a team to not win. This may occur as teasing, harassment, social exclusion, or even aggressive behavior.

Some students may engage in disruptive behavior for the purpose (i.e., function) of gaining attention from adults or other students. The Good Behavior Game includes checkmarks and comments by the teacher after disruptive behavior may inadvertently reinforce (increase the frequency, duration, or intensity) of some students’ disruptive behaviors. Please refer to the “Troubleshooting” section above for related tips. It may be helpful to supplement the Good Behavior Game with individualized interventions for students with persistent, pervasive behavior challenges. Please refer to the “FBA” tab of this website for more information on individualized behavior assessments and interventions.

Research Support:

Elementary School Classrooms: Strong intervention for general education classrooms, adaptable to special education classrooms

Middle School Classrooms: Promising intervention that supports classroom rules and contingent reinforcement, may be effective in general education or special education classrooms

High School Classrooms: Promising intervention that supports classroom rules and contingent reinforcement, may be effective in general education or special education classrooms

Since 1969, a very large body of strong, scientific research has supported the effectiveness of the Good Behavior Game. Most of this research has been conducted in Elementary School classrooms. However, application in Middle and High Schools...

Some research has indicated that this intervention may actually reduce criminality, tobacco, and substance abuse after graduation from school.

Several adaptations to the Good Behavior Game have been researched.

Sources:

Some of the above content was adapted from the Good Behavior Game manual available online at: <http://www.evidencebasedprograms.org/Default.aspx?tabid=154>

Barrish, H.H., Saunders, M., & Wold, M.M. (1969). Good behavior game: Effects of individual contingencies for group consequences on disruptive behavior in a classroom. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 2, 119-124.

Harris, V.W. & Sherman, J.A. (1973). Use and analysis of the "Good Behavior Game" to reduce disruptive classroom behavior. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 6, 405-417.

Medland, M. B. & Stachnik, T.J. (1972). Good-behavior Game: A replication and systematic analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 5, 45-51.