

# PARENT HANDOUT: DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN



ADHD Skill 3

## WHAT IS A DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN?

- ▶ Children with ADHD can find the demands of school challenging. For example, they may have a hard sitting still or paying attention, talk when it's not their turn in class, or have difficulty getting along with their peers.
- ▶ A Daily School Check-In is a system parents and teachers use to identify, track, and change your child's problem behaviors at school.
- ▶ It involves:
  - 1) identifying the behaviors you and your child's teacher would like to change at school;
  - 2) working with your child's teacher(s) to monitor these behaviors;
  - 3) the teacher(s) giving you daily feedback on your child; and
  - 4) you providing specific rewards for your child when they engage in good behavior.
- ▶ These rewards increase your child's motivation to behave at school, encourage them to work toward their goals, and make it more likely they will continue behaving in the future.
- ▶ This strategy is effective at addressing a broad range of behavior problems at school. You can partner with one teacher or several to improve your child's behavior.

Daily School Check-In			
Date	Teacher		
Today, Daniel...	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	A Little/None of the Time
Stayed in his seat	😊	😐	😞
Kept his hands to himself	😊	😐	😞
Handed in his homework	😊	😐	😞
Followed directions	😊	😐	😞
Raised hand before talking	😊	😐	😞
Notes: _____			Total 😊
_____			
_____			

## HERE'S HOW TO USE A DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN

1

### Create a list of 3-5 problematic school behaviors.

Talk with your child's teacher to identify 3-5 behaviors that cause problems for your child at school (e.g., getting out of their seat, bothering other students, forgetting to turn in homework, breaking classroom rules). The list can include both academic and social behaviors, two areas that can be challenging for children with ADHD.

2

### Create a list of your desired behaviors.

These should be the behaviors you and the teacher would like to see instead, stated in a positive way and focused on behaviors your child's teacher can observe (e.g., staying in seat, keeping hands to self, handing in homework, following classroom rules). Include 1-2 "easier" behaviors that you know your child is able to do in order to boost your child's confidence.

3

### Make a daily report card.

Decide on a way for your child's teacher to track their behavior and share it with you. It should be clear, easy to use, and include the teacher's input. This can be as simple as a daily note home, but parents and teachers usually find that something like our examples work better.

## HERE'S HOW TO USE A DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN (cont.)

4

### Decide on check-in frequency.

When you first start using this strategy, it's best if the teacher can do it every day. As your child's behavior improves, you can gradually decrease how often this check-in occurs until you no longer need it. Teachers should make sure the card goes in your child's backpack (or gets sent to you electronically) at the end of the day whenever they complete it.

5

### Create a list of at least 5-10 rewards to give at home.

Think of as many ideas as you can. Include a range of reward types (items, activities, privileges) and sizes/costs (free, small, medium, large). Have rewards you can give every day (e.g., extra screen or story time) and once a week (e.g., going out to eat), as well as some "big ticket" rewards that take longer to earn (e.g., going to a sporting event or movies once a month or less). Use our list of reward ideas to get started. Be sure to only include rewards you are willing and able to give if your child exhibits ideal behavior. If your child's teachers or school use rewards, add their ideas too. Get your child's input to be sure they are motivated to earn the rewards on your list.

6

### Decide what your child needs to do to earn a reward.

Be specific about what your child needs to do to earn a reward (e.g., "5 smiley faces or checkmarks = a small reward"). Easier school behaviors or ones done correctly less of the time should earn smaller rewards and harder tasks, bigger rewards. An example of how to reward behaviors differently based on your child's individual strengths and challenges is the following: If your child is generally able to get along with their classmates, they can earn 5 extra minutes of screen time each day they're able to meet this goal. If they find doing work in class harder than positive social behavior, they can earn 15 extra minutes each day they work without issue. Younger children do best with rewards they earn daily, while older children may prefer to "bank" credit to earn bigger rewards over time.

7

### Review the check-in card each day the teacher completes it.

Follow through and consistency are key here. This will show your child you take this seriously and provide opportunities to highlight progress and troubleshoot obstacles. If they have a harder day, remind your child that they have another chance to do well tomorrow.

8

### Provide rewards as soon as possible.

When your child earns a reward, be sure to give it to them. Try to provide rewards as soon as possible after your child earns them (*but never before!*). This will help them connect their good behavior at school to the positive feeling of earning a reward.

9

### Set realistic goals for improvement.

It's okay to start small to make sure your "bigger" goals are within reach. For example, if your child is running out of the classroom 10 times a day, staying in class all day may be too challenging at first. Work your way up to this by gradually increasing the amount of time your child needs to stay in class (e.g., aiming for a small but consistent improvement each week).

10

### Remember to praise good behavior.

Praise your child whenever their school behavior earns them a reward. The more parents reliably praise and provide promised rewards for good behavior, the better children will feel and the faster behavior will improve.

11

### Adjust the check-in card and rewards list over time.

As your child's school behavior improves or certain rewards lose their value, you can adjust your Daily School Check-In card and/or rewards chart to maintain your child's motivation and progress. For example, after your child is able to consistently speak appropriately to peers 2-3 days/week, you can increase the goal to 4-5 days/week. You can also adapt these if new problems develop.

# Daily School Check-In



Date

Today, \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher

Most of the Time



Some of the Time



A Little/None of the Time



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Total 😊

# Daily School Check-In



Date

Today, \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher

Most of the Time



Some of the Time



A Little/None of the Time



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Total 😊

# Daily School Check-In



Date

Today, \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher

Most of the Time



Some of the Time



A Little/None of the Time



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Total 😊

# Daily School Check-In



Date

Today, \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher

Most of the Time



Some of the Time



A Little/None of the Time



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Total 😊

# Daily School Check-In



Date

Today, \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher

Most of the Time



Some of the Time



A Little/None of the Time



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Total 😊

# PARENT HANDOUT: DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN TIPS



ADHD Skill 3

## HOW CAN A DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Having a Daily School Check-in helps parents, teachers, and children set clear goals for improving behavior. It helps you create an organized and fair system to track your child's school behavior and provide rewards. You decide together what your child needs to do to earn rewards, which helps your child focus on behaving.
- ▶ This strategy increases communication and consistency between home and your child's school. When parents and teachers are on the same page, children face predictable consequences and their behavior often improves.
- ▶ When used properly, the Daily School Check-In can be done simply, quickly, and easily. Using a Daily School Check-In and rewards system can give your child the extra nudge they need to do better in school. When rewards are carefully chosen and only given for good behavior, you may be surprised by how well your child will behave to earn what they want!

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **I wasn't raised with rewards and don't like the idea of "bribing" my child.**

All children are different, and yours may need some extra motivation to behave the way you'd like. Your family may already have ways of informally "rewarding" your child, such as promising your child something when they do well in school or follow rules. Here, you're implementing a predetermined, clear, and consistent system to improve your child's school behavior, increasing your influence over your child's behavior and keeping both you and your child accountable.

### **Why should I reward my child for behaving the way they are supposed to at school?**

Just as adults appreciate being rewarded for working hard, children respond well to tangible incentives for good behavior. The Daily School Check-In helps you and your child's teacher shift your attention toward the things your child does right. They provide another way to influence your child's behavior.

### **This seems like it will take a lot of time. I'm too busy!**

A small time investment can lead to big improvements in your child's school behavior. This may take some time to set up at first, but eventually it becomes part of families' and schools' routines. Most parents and teachers actually gain time back, because they spend less time managing children's misbehavior. Over time, families often find children do not need rewards to behave.

### **My child's teacher thinks this will be too hard to do. They're busy!**

We know teachers have very full schedules, so try to keep this system as simple as possible. Discuss what's possible for them and decide together what makes the most sense in the context of their day. Many teachers find that they can complete a simple behavior log in a few seconds! Over time, this will lead to improvement in your child's school behavior, decreasing the amount of time teachers have to respond to problem behaviors during the day. The more feedback the school provides, the better you'll be able to change your child's behavior.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS (CONTINUED)

### My child keeps forgetting to bring their Daily School Check-In sheet home.

Children, especially those with ADHD, can be forgetful! Work with your child's teacher to get the sheet into your child's homework folder or backpack. When you first start using this technique, consider awarding your child some smiley faces or checkmarks on their rewards chart for simply returning their sheet to you. This will give them some extra motivation until this behavior becomes second nature. It also gives them a reason to bring the worksheet home even when they have a hard day at school. If paper sheets seem too challenging for your child or their teacher, emailing the sheet may help.

### I thought rewards worked best when children get them immediately after good behavior. How does this work when their behavior is at school and rewards are at home?

Review your reward system with your child's teacher(s). Some teachers are able to give rewards for good behavior in school (e.g., extra time doing a fun activity, helping the teacher with a task, getting a small toy or prize). This could be done at a set time of the day or week so your child knows when their reward is coming. If you're giving the rewards at home, try to do so as soon after school as possible. You (or another caregiver doing pickup) can talk about it on the way home and then let your child collect rewards as soon as you get there. Or, if you won't be seeing your child directly after school, you can sometimes leave a fun note in their backpack reminding them that you will pick rewards for good behavior as soon as you all get back home.

### My child is having a hard time earning rewards.

Be sure to include a range of goal behaviors on your list, including at least one or two that your child can do some of the time. Once they have some success, they will be even more motivated to earn rewards for all of the behaviors on the list. If you're unsure which behaviors are easier for your child to do, their teacher may be able to help.

If your child's ADHD symptoms make it difficult for them to do the things they want or need to do, they may need additional support, such as medication and/or therapy. Check in with your child's primary care provider about medication and whether a referral to a behavioral health specialist could be helpful.

## REWARD IDEAS

### Small Rewards

- Play with friends
- Spend time with caregivers without siblings
- Cook meal together
- Play cards
- Go to library
- Play video game
- Have extra treat after dinner
- Play game together
- Skip a chore
- Get screen time
- Pick small prize out at the store

### Medium or Large Rewards

- Have a sleepover
- Go for a hike
- Go swimming, bowling, or biking
- Eat out
- Plan family outing
- Visit a museum
- Go to the movies
- Make craft together
- Take music or dance lessons
- Get a new piece of clothing
- Buy a book or game