

GROUP CONTINGENCIES

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HOW TO USE GROUP CONTINGENCIES
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GROUP CONTINGENCIES

Definition-an arrangement in which the consequences for group members depend, at least in part, on the behavior of other group members

Types of Group Contingencies

1. Consequence Sharing/Hero Procedure-an individual or small group determines the consequences for the entire group (ex. 2 children often fighting, the whole group gets rewarded when there is no fighting)
2. Interdependent Group Contingency-the behavior of all group members determines the consequences for all

Options:

- ◆ measure each group member's performance (ex. everyone's homework completion must be above 60% each week for the group to receive reinforcement)
- ◆ use a group average for the group to receive reinforcement (ex. the average homework completion for the entire class must be above 60% each week for the group to receive reinforcement)
- ◆ random selection -lottery (ex. at the end of the week, choose one student at random from the class list-if that student's homework completion for the week is above 60%, then the entire group receives reinforcement)

When to Use

- ◆ Use when a large number of people engage in the same behavior
- ◆ Use when it is difficult to determine who is the person or persons responsible for the behavior (i.e. stealing, vandalism)
- ◆ Use when one or only a few people are responsible for the inappropriate behavior, and it would be offensive to the rest of the group to give that one or few special privileges

Steps to Implement a Group Contingency

1. Choose 1 behavior to change-defined observably, measurably
2. Measure the present level of the behavior (baseline measure). This is typically measured over 5 days. Baseline is used to set achievable criterion for reinforcement and to determine progress during implementation.
3. Select a powerful reinforcer. The teacher can poll the class or simply observe the group to see what they do with their free time. The reinforcer should be in addition to current privileges, not a way to earn what is already in the schedule (i.e. should not be used to earn recess)
4. Select the type of group contingency to use. Avoid competition between groups; instead use competition within groups to beat their own best score.
5. Make sure that everyone in the class is capable of performing the behavior.
6. Set criterion for reinforcement at the level of "reasonable improvement".
7. Praise the group for appropriate performance throughout the time the contingency is in effect and pair praise with the reinforcement when it is delivered.
8. Monitor performance throughout intervention and compare it with baseline and ongoing progress

ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
-group encourages appropriate behavior from other group members	-groups may place excessive pressure on one member who is not performing appropriate behavior (threatening, ridicule, taunting, etc.)
-group stops reinforcing inappropriate behavior	-one or more group members may sabotage to gain attention
-convenience, allows management of the behavior of a large number of people through one set of data and one reinforcement	-some raise ethical questions about the fairness of reinforcing or depriving some group members because of the actions of others

EXAMPLES OF GROUP CONTINGENCIES

RESPONSE COST - The teacher offers students extra free time if they do not perform a particular inappropriate behavior. The teacher writes the numbers 10 through 0 on the board and crosses off the highest number remaining for each time any student exhibits the behavior. (Good for behaviors of out-of-seat, talking out, hitting, etc. The free time could be substituted by a teacher-directed favored activity.)

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

USING DRL TO REDUCE INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS -Using baseline measures the teacher sets the upper limit of inappropriate behavior. If the students perform at or below that level, the class earns a reinforcer. For example, a teacher tells the students that they can begin recess 5 minutes earlier than usual if they talk out 25 times or fewer. As the students improve, the teacher lowers the criterion gradually.

USING UNPREDICTABLE TIMINGS TO CATCH APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR - The teacher tells the students the behavior he/she wants to observe and sets the timer to go off at intervals that the students cannot predict. It is important that there be both long and short intervals and that students not be able to predict when the timer will go off. (Sometimes a silent timer can be more effective.) Each time the timer goes off, the teacher checks to see if all the students are exhibiting the desired behavior. If so, the class receives a point. Each point can be exchanged for minutes of favored activities, tangibles, etc.

THE GOOD BEHAVIOR GAME TO DECREASE DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR - The class is broken into two groups/teams. The teacher lists the rules for behaviors and teaches what those desired behaviors look like. Each time a student breaks a rule, a number is placed under the team's name. If each team's count remains below a number designated by the teacher, each team wins. They win a predetermined reinforcer. (Remember, it is best to avoid blatantly competitive games.)

Team 1

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Team 2

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REDUCING TRANSITION TIMES FROM ONE ACTIVITY TO ANOTHER - Teachers often have the problem of getting their class settled down after a vigorous free-time activity or when coming in from another class. The teacher informs the students that they will have two minutes to be "ready to work" (be sure to teach what "ready to work" looks like). If the students are ready to work when the timer goes off, the teacher awards a point. The points can be exchanged for favored activities.

INCREASING STUDENT PRODUCTIVITY WITH PERSONAL BESTS - Teachers often concentrate on student accuracy, but do not give attention to increasing student speed (fluency); therefore, sometimes students work too slowly. In the procedure of beating their personal bests, students are timed completing a task and the teacher calculates how many correct answers the student completed in that time. The student records his/her score and each day tries to beat his/her personal best.