

Non-Food Reward Ideas at School

Non-food items or activities can be great rewards for recognizing kids for their achievements or good behavior. Plus, they can support good health! Take a look below at some non-food alternatives you can use as rewards in your classroom.



No-Cost Rewards:

- Words of appreciation: Saying “You did a great job” or “I appreciate your help” can go a long way. Simply recognizing kids for good work or behavior is a great motivator and is always appreciated.
- Recognition in announcements.
- Class outdoors (as appropriate).
- Read to a younger class or be a helper in another classroom.
- Extra credit.
- A “no homework” pass.
- Making deliveries to the office for you.
- Taking care of the class animal.
- Read morning announcements.
- Play a favorite game or puzzle.
- Walk with a teacher during lunch.
- Eat lunch with a teacher/principal.
- Design a class/school bulletin board.
- Being featured on a photo recognition board.
- Earn points to be used for privileges.
- A note of recognition from the teacher or principal.
- Phone call, letter or note sent home to the parents praising the student.
- Have a teacher read a special book to the entire class.

Low-Cost Rewards:

- Stickers
- Shoelace tokens/charms
- School supplies such as bookmarks, erasers, pencils, rulers, art supplies, etc.
- Finger puppets
- Trophy, ribbon or certificate.
- Coupons or gift certificates
- A pass to the zoo, aquarium, museum, or school game/event
- A “mystery pack” (gift-wrapped items such as a notepad, folder, puzzle, sports cards, etc.)
- Items that promote physical activity such as Frisbees, hula hoops, jump ropes, balls, or hacky sacks
- Something from the “treasure box” (containing different non-food items such as those mentioned above)

Options for non-food rewards are limited only by imagination, time, and resources.

TIP: match the reward with the action.:

- For completing reading assignments, give a book, magazine, or word-play activity.
- When a class project is successfully completed, reward the child with a pencil or eraser.



Some portions adapted from Clemson Extension Home and Garden Information Center and Michigan Team Nutrition (a partnership between the Michigan Department of Education and Michigan State University Extension).