TURNING PAGES,
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LEARNING WHERE LIFE HAPPENS

# Making Token Boards Work for Your Child

**A visual way to make progress visible and goals feel manageable.**

Short on time? Jump to page 3 for the My Token Board planner.

## Start Here

Sometimes a task feels too big, the finish line feels too far away, or your child has trouble staying engaged long enough to finish. A token board can help make the path more visible: your child earns a token for a specific action, sees progress toward a goal, and exchanges the tokens for something they value.

A token board isn't necessary for every child or every task - before adding one, consider whether the task needs to be shorter, easier, more interesting, or better matched to your child's current skills.

**The big idea: Make the goal clear, the progress visible, and success achievable.**

A token board works best when your child understands what earns a token, can see how many tokens are needed, and values what happens when the board is complete. The tokens should help your child understand the plan - not add another confusing task.

## Try This: Set up a board that works

### Choose one clear goal

**Try:** Decide what your child will do to earn a token and make it specific and achievable. Instead of "Be good," try put one item in the basket, complete one part of the activity, try one step of a new task, or join a short, shared activity. Start with something your child can reasonably accomplish - you can build from there.

### Choose something worth working toward

**Try:** Let your child choose from a few realistic options - a favorite activity, song, book, sensory activity, or preferred toy. What motivates them can change from day to day. Stay flexible if their interests or preferences change.

### Make it theirs

**Try:** Add your child's favorite characters, colors, animals, or interests. A board that feels familiar and appealing may be more inviting to use.

### Start with a reachable finish line

**Try:** Begin with a small number of tokens—3 tokens is a good starting point. Place a token or two on the board before you begin to make the goal easier to reach. Add more tokens only when your child can comfortably manage the task and the wait. The right number depends on your child's skills and the situation.

### Give tokens promptly

**Try:** When your child meets the agreed-upon goal, give the token right away and briefly describe what they did: "You finished the questions. One token!" Place the token where your child can see it and keep your explanation short - especially if language is already making the task harder.

### Make the exchange predictable

**Try:** Before you begin, show your child what happens when the board is full. When they earn the final token, follow through with the agreed-upon activity or item. At first, practice the whole routine together: earn a token, watch it go on the board, finish the board, and exchange

*Pick one routine - not all of them - and one clear goal to start.*

## What to look for

You don't need formal data to notice whether the board is helping. Over several opportunities, watch for:

- ☐ Understanding what earns a token
- ☐ Anticipating what happens when the board is full
- ☐ Participating more comfortably in the agreed-upon activity
- ☐ Needing fewer reminders about what comes next
- ☐ Moving through the routine with less uncertainty

*One small change is information - and a place to build from.*

## If it doesn't work...

If the board isn't helping, that isn't a verdict on your child. It is information. Try:

- Make the goal smaller. One action may be enough to earn a token.
- Shorten the wait. Reduce the number of tokens needed before the exchange.
- Check the reward. Offer choices and make sure the selected activity or item is genuinely appealing.
- Make the task easier. A token board cannot make a task accessible if the task is too difficult, uncomfortable, or overwhelming.
- Check the timing. Your child may need food, rest, movement, connection, or a break before they can participate.
- Notice what the child is communicating. Refusal, distress, or disengagement may signal that something needs to change - not that more tokens are needed.

## Keep it flexible

A token board is a tool, not the goal. As your child becomes more independent, gradually reduce tokens or phase out the board. Increase expectations only when both the task and the wait remain manageable.

**Remember:** *The token board is a visual support, not another task to complete. Basic needs and communication should never depend upon earning tokens. Your child doesn't have to earn access to comfort, food, water, the bathroom, or a needed break.*

## Want more practical ideas?

Explore PAGE resources for communication, learning, participation, independence, and everyday routines. Explore PAGE Resources → If you'd like occasional ideas delivered by email, join the PAGE list at **pageaba.com**.

## Need help figuring out what to try?

Every child is different. PAGE can help you identify practical, individualized ways to support learning, communication, participation, and independence in everyday life. **Learn more or schedule a consultation at pageaba.com.**

# My Token Board

*Explain the goal and exchange before beginning. Give tokens promptly when the agreed-upon action occurs. Follow through on the exchange and adjust the plan if it is too difficult or isn't motivating.*

**Make it reusable:** Print and laminate the board and token pieces. Attach small Velcro dots to the token spaces and the backs of the tokens so your child can add and remove them as they earn them. No laminator? Use a sheet protector and reusable stickers or dry-erase markers.

