

Rewards

Setting goals and planning rewards can help you:

- ✓ **motivate** to get started, keep working, and reach the end;
- ✓ **enjoy your success**, relax and reduce stress, remember your priorities, and approach the next goal with more energy; and
- ✓ **reinforce** good behavior and build new habits.

Rewards can be activities or things. Here are some examples to get you started:

Short activities: Call a friend, go for a walk/run, send a postcard or write a letter, check your mail or run an errand on campus, stretch, pick flowers or collect leaves, breathe deeply for 5 minutes, spend 10 minutes (or 20, but give yourself a limit!) indulging in your favorite online habit, do 25 jumping jacks, listen to a favorite song, or brag about your success to someone who will be happy for you.

Longer activities: Watch your favorite movie, paint your nails, go on a Gray Fund trip, make a playlist or mix cd, make soup or bake some goodies, re-read Harry Potter (or any other fun book), reorganize your closet and find things to give away, create a collage/painting/poem/song, meditate, take a nap, go for a drive, play a board game, play an instrument, take your camera on a journey, watch tv, or volunteer.

Less expensive things: A cup of tea/coffee/cocoa/cider, an iTunes song, stickers or a coloring book (remember those?), newspapers/magazines, gum/mints, toiletries (new shampoo, lip gloss, shaving cream, etc.), warm socks or slippers, iPhone app or ring tone, school supplies, houseplants, candles, printouts of your favorite photos, or snacks.

More expensive things: Clothes/jewelry/shoes, music equipment, cameras, cell phones, bikes and bike equipment, video games, a GPS device, movies, art supplies, a fish tank, gourmet snacks (chocolate, cheese, sorbet, etc.), Renn Fayre costumes, magazine subscriptions, or new glasses.

Activities that cost money/bigger rewards: Get a massage or other spa service, get a new tattoo, road trips, dinner parties, go out for a nice meal, concerts, lectures, or skiing/snowboarding,

“Rewards” that you do anyway: Take a shower or bubble bath, exercise, brush/floss your teeth, go grocery shopping, water your plants, play with your pets, do laundry or change your sheets, shop for gifts, get a haircut, shave, plan your travel for breaks, clean your room, or return your library books.

Things to remember:

- ✓ Many of these things are part of your normal life anyway. Use them strategically. Don't pick rewards that you're going to give yourself no matter what; focus on something you can actually withhold if you don't earn it.
- ✓ Rewards should be enjoyable *and* restorative. If you need to recover or apologize the morning after a reward, it may not have served its purpose.
- ✓ You don't have to do everything perfectly to earn a reward, but you may want to adjust the reward to match what you think you've actually earned.
- ✓ Find what works for you. One man's reward is another man's punishment.

If you don't like rewards because you fear they'll take away your motivation, stifle your creativity, or turn academics into a means instead of an end, the problem may be that you need to select rewards that better fit your style. Having something meaningful to say in class or at office hours, earning a grade you're proud of, finishing a paper in time to read it over the next day, or simply feeling smarter may be reward enough. For most of us, however, a little extra incentive goes a long way. **Try to be a scientist about it;** run an experiment or two and analyze your results.