

Good Behavior Game

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The Good Behavior Game (GBG) has been well researched as a strategy that teachers can use to manage their students behavior, and has demonstrated excellent outcomes across all grade levels (k-12) and for students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. It is a valuable addition to any teacher's tool kit as a Tier 1 strategy to increase time on task and rule-following behavior.

The GBG takes advantage of three major sources of influence on children's behavior: competition, cooperation, and peer support. The GBG consists of splitting the class up into teams and having the teams *compete* for a *preferred activity* (e.g., extra recess time, first in line privileges, free time, get out of homework) or *reward* (e.g., item from treasure chest, snack, etc.). The competition involves which team behaves the best during certain times throughout the day. As a result, students *cooperate* with their team members to be the team who wins and gets access to a desired activity or reward. The GBG involves peer support because students

Getting Started: the Basics of GBG

- **Decide on a time to play**
 - Choose a time/lesson/subject when students have exhibited problem behaviors in the past, e.g., attention seeking, off task behavior, inattentiveness
 - The GBG is generally played during times of the day when students are likely to engage in off-task, disruptive behavior. It is not intended to be implemented all day long every day of the week.
- **Divide class into two to three teams**
 - Splitting the class into two teams may be the easiest in the beginning
 - Have the teams come up with names and make it a big deal
- **Explain the rules of the game**
 - Teams earn points based on exhibiting
 - Teams can lose points based on a problem behavior but the lesson is not interrupted. Simply shake your head and erase a point and move on, i.e., do not discuss or give verbal input about the loss
 - Explain rule violating behaviors

- Pick 3 rule breaking behaviors that expectations such as safe, respectful, responsible and demonstrate what that looks like
 - Have students model what that would look like prior to beginning the game
 - Stay positive; focus on what you want to see, not what you have seen go wrong in the past
 - When awarding points, simply nod and record. The point is to give continuous feedback without disrupting the flow of instruction
- Tell them what the incentive will be prior to beginning the game, or, use the "mystery motivator" where the team gets to select a slip of paper that tells which reward they have won at the end of the game period
 - Make the reward something desirable, e.g., 3 minutes of free conversation with peers, extra recess minutes, first to line up for lunch, pass for skipping a portion of a homework assignment, bonus point on a quiz, etc.
- Set a time limit
 - Depending on the grade level/class, you may want to shorten the time, but typically this is most effective if limited to the time it takes to teach your lesson or complete a seatwork assignment
- Develop a scoreboard that you can put up the teams' points as they are either earned or subtracted.
- When the game is over, debrief
 - It is important to give positive feedback on the game and what specific positive behaviors that were seen. Be encouraging! Remind the students they can improve performance next time
 - Discuss what behaviors "won it" for the team and how in the future team members can support each other

Variations:

- **Vary Time of Day or Subject Matter**
 - Pick a specific subject matter and continuously use the game for that subject
 - Play game during the same subject for an extended amount of time over multiple days.
 - Pick different times of day as needed

- Play once or twice a day, picking a new time slot each day
- **Vary frequency of access to pay off** for winning team(s)
 - Begin with the reward at the end of each GBG session, then allow banking for a bigger pay off given less frequently.
 - Remember, it is unlikely that waiting an entire week for pay off will be effective for most classrooms
 - Allow winning team to "bank" the wins for greater payoff
 - Surprise the class with a "win" for all teams due to superior performance
- **Vary Team constellation**
 - Divide class into more/less groups as needed
 - Divide by tables; odds/evens; etc., e.g., run the game with 3-4 teams and keep a continuous tally
 - More than 4 teams is likely to be too difficult to manage
- **Vary Rules**
 - Points can be awarded as Golf (least number of problem behavior), Basketball (most number of positive behavior) or a combination of Basketball (positives observed) and Golf (subtraction of points) combined
 - Each team reaches a certain number of positive points and they both win (variation on Basketball)
 - Team with the least amount of points over multiple days wins (golf version)
- **Vary Behavioral Expectations**
 - Pick 1-3 expectations per session
 - Focus on one expectation at a time and add more over time
 - Examples of general vs. specific expectations:
 - General-Stay on task during direct instruction
 - General-Stay on task during seatwork
 - Specific-Write complete lecture notes
 - Specific- Maintain teacher eye contact
 - Specific-Whisper during group work/think, pair, share (specific)
- **Vary Incentives**
 - Ask students for ideas on what they would like (see: www.pent.ca.gov, BSP Manual, section 12 for ideas)

- Monetary
 - Prize box, food, school supplies, raffles, tickets to the dance, etc.
 - Privileges
 - Line leader, first to lunch, first to select computer game, classroom buddies (work with a student in a lower grade, teach them a game, reading, art projects, etc) homework pass, extra recess, etc.
- **Vary knowledge of what winning earns or what behaviors are being recognized**
 - You can always institute the “Mystery” aspect of many parts of this game!
 - **Mystery Behavior**
 - Only tell them 2 of the 3 behaviors you are awarding points for; point out the observation of the “Mystery” behavior, but don’t say what it is...keeps them guessing. Nod and point to the team or team member.
 - **Mystery Time Limit**
 - Tell them that the game will stop before the “normal” ending. They won’t know when it’s coming.
 - **Mystery Points**
 - Use a small white board or pad of paper to keep track of team points.
 - Display some points on the class white board and some points just for your eyes.
 - Periodically update the class white board.
 - **Mystery Incentive**
 - Give options of different incentives but don’t tell them which one they will get
 - Write the reward on a slip of paper and place in bags or under a series of 4-5 styrofoam cups and have the winning team choose which bag or cup they have won or have losing team choose the bag for winning team.

ADD a "Most Valuable Player"

- Acknowledge a MVP from the winning team in front of peers

- Pick a student that showed consistent or improved behavior (Hint: don't always choose your most compliant; choose a student that doesn't always perform well, but did this time)
 - Have the team applaud this person
 - You can also pick a MVP from the losing team
 - MVP from winning teams picks an MVP from losing team

- Each MVP can receive an additional reward, depending on grade level. Some examples include:
 - MVP “Name in Lights”
The student decorates a small whiteboard with his/her name and it is posted on wall. You can hang a small string of lights around this if you choose.
 - MVP medal (wear it for the day); line leader; homework pass; etc.
 - MVP Raffle- MVPs get a special raffle ticket for a weekly raffle either in class or school wide
 - School wide-weekly MVP winner is announced over intercom system; (Note: This encourages/holds accountable all teachers to participate in GBG

Address Potential Saboteurs:

- Students who purposely display inappropriate behaviors to sabotage game for the team may emerge. This student is demonstrating that more than GBG may be needed to address the problem. GBG is a Tier One intervention!
 - Have them be on the their own team, a team of one, or a saboteur group, or have them sit out the game period
 - Explain how you understand that they may have a hard time playing the game and they can just “sit this one out”
 - Make sure that what the team wins is something the saboteur may want
 - Ask the student if a coach would help them participate next time and pair the student with a willing team member
 - Include them on the team but don’t count their points

How to Succeed with GBG:

- You are the master of the game. You can manipulate the game for which ever outcome you desire. You control how many points are earned/taken away, who earns them, and ultimately who wins.
- Many teachers have “target” students (students who need extra behavioral support) and make sure to acknowledge them when earning points or make them the MVP. This game allows you to shape behavior (i.e., to reinforce closer and closer approximations to your goals for positive behavior from each individual student.)
- This game will not be effective if the students believe the teacher doesn't really care about them personally. Authoritarian style teachers fail, whereas authoritative teachers succeed. Learn which style you employ and consider what highly effective teachers do differently.
See: <http://www.pent.ca.gov/pos/cl/es/classroommanagementstyle.pdf>
- It is your positive encouragement and relationship skills that are the foundation of any intervention. Strive throughout the day for a 5 to 1 ratio in your classroom. Five positive statements, gestures or actions for every correction given. These are the classrooms that get the greatest results with GBG.
- Remember, overuse of GBG, such as using it all day long can result in satiation as the incentives can't be delivered with enough power and frequency to maintain interest.
- Try to avoid using language during the awarding of points. This can disrupt the flow of instruction or the group's on task behavior during seatwork. (Some teachers simply hit a chime during seatwork and the teams know a point has been given.)
- When you first begin to play this game, teachers have found the students love it and want to play it all day, all the time. Don't fall into this trap.
- This game was designed with a specific time limit. This time limit and feedback is one of the things that distinguishes it from an on-going table points system. The GBG is time sensitive, behavior specific, and has a closure. Whereas with table points, the time limit is longer (days or weeks), behaviors are general or points are awarded for other things and the only closure is the incentive.

- Think of GBG with a sports analogy. the coach does not run onto the field to correct behavior; rather, the coach debriefs after the quarter and encourages the team players.
- As with any game, over time, the novelty of the game begins to wear off, so changing aspects of the game over time will keep it fresh and exciting. Don't make too many changes at one time.
 - You don't want to give away all the good ideas at once! Have fun and don't be afraid to change it up once in a while.

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