

MODULE: REINFORCEMENT

REINFORCER CASE STUDY EXAMPLES
Negative Reinforcement: Zack

Zack is a 9-year-old with ASD, who receives services in a self-contained classroom for learners with ASD. His teacher, Mr. Nelson, and his parents are concerned that Zack does not stay at activities long enough to learn new skills or eat a nutritious meal. They have determined that Zack finds it extremely aversive to stay seated for longer than approximately 2 minutes at a time. When Zack is directed to stay seated, he screams loudly and hits his head with his hand. Mr. Nelson and Zack's parents agree that they would like Zack to stay seated for 5 minutes without prompting from adults during meals, individual work time, or small-group activities. To accomplish this, Mr. Nelson decides to implement negative reinforcement.

Prior to implementing the intervention, Mr. Nelson collects duration data during meal times, individual work times, and small-group activities over the course of four days to establish a baseline for the target skill. The data reveal that Zack is able to stay seated for approximately 1 minute and 30 seconds before getting up from the meal or activity.

Mr. Nelson also establishes the following performance criteria before implementing the negative reinforcement intervention.

Target skill: Zack will stay seated without prompting from adults for 5 minutes during individual work time.	
<i>Performance Criterion</i>	<i>Behavior</i>
Phase 1	Zack will stay seated for 1 minute during individual work time.
Phase 2	Zack will stay seated for 2 minutes during individual work time.
Phase 3	Zack will stay seated for 5 minutes during individual work time.

Because Mr. Nelson knows that Zack has considerable difficulty staying seated for extended periods of time and that he finds it aversive, he decides to create picture instructions that will cue Zack to use the target skill (see below). He also acquires a kitchen timer that he can set for a certain number of minutes so that Zack will know how long he needs to stay seated before he can get up.



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The next day, Mr. Nelson implements the negative reinforcement intervention. During individual work time, Mr. Nelson stands next to Zack's desk and waits for him to get up. After approximately one minute, Zack stands up to leave the area. As he does so, Mr. Nelson shows Zack the card and says, "Sit in chair. Finish work." Zack starts screaming, but Mr. Nelson gives Zack the instructions again and points to his chair. Zack sits down. As soon as Zack sits down, Mr. Nelson sets the kitchen timer for one minute. If Zack gets up at any time during the one-minute time period, Mr. Nelson resets the kitchen timer so that Zack stays seated for the required amount of time. When the kitchen timer beeps after one minute, Mr. Nelson tells Zack, "All done. You can get up." Zack then gets up and walks away. After five minutes, Mr. Nelson directs Zack back to his desk and repeats the process again. When Zack is able to sit independently for 1 minute during three consecutive trials, Mr. Nelson moves to the next performance criterion (i.e., sit for two minutes). At this point, Zack will not be allowed to get up until he can sit independently for two minutes during individual work time. Mr. Nelson completes this process until Zack can sit independently for five minutes. After Zack has acquired the target skill at individual work time, Mr. Nelson plans to implement the intervention during meal times and small-group activities as well to increase Zack's ability to sit during a variety of activities. Zack's parents have expressed interest in using negative reinforcement at home, which will also promote generalization of the target skill.