



Group Reinforcement Response Contingency



Definition

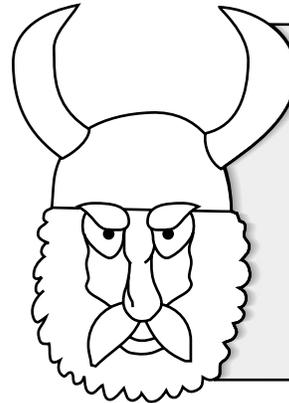
A group reinforcement response contingency reinforces an entire group when particular members meet the arranged condition or contingency. The contingency can be evaluated on the performance of a specific individual, the average of two or three random students' performances, or the average of the high and low student's performance.

Things to Do

- ✓ Select a contingency.
- ✓ Set a criterion.
- ✓ Choose consequences.
- ✓ Give feedback.

✓ Select a contingency.

There are two basic types of group contingencies: **individual** and **collective**. Use an **individual** group contingency to help a **specific** student. To improve the skills of a **group** of students, use a **collective** contingency.



Individual

- Specific student
- Consequence dependent on one student

Collective

- Group
- Consequence dependent on entire group

Use an Individual Group Contingency

Basing the group reward on only one student's performance may place too much pressure on that student. A better approach includes averaging the performance of three or four randomly selected students or averaging the highest and lowest performance of the students in a classroom. For example, the class will get 15 minutes of extra recess if the homework assignments of three randomly selected students averages at least 80%.

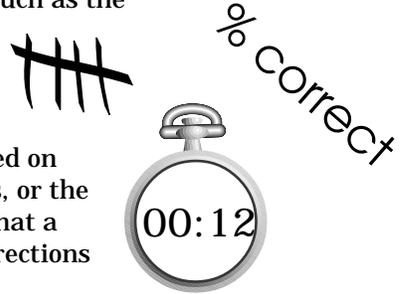
Use a Collective Contingency

In contrast, a collective or all-group contingency is based on the performance of all members in the group. Use a collective contingency to improve social skills or motivation for an entire classroom. For example, a teacher wants to decrease talking with friends and increase independent seat work. As long as her students work independently and stay in their seats, the instructor plays music of their choice. However, if any students disregard these rules, the instructor uses the remote control and pauses the music until students are back on task.

 **Set a criterion.**

Identify Behavior

Begin by identifying a behavior that is observable and measurable, such as the amount of time students are on task, the percentage of problems completed on math assignments, or the number of times that a student follows directions without arguing.



Check Student Capability to Do Behavior

Check to make sure that the student is capable of doing the behavior. Group contingencies should not be used for teaching new skills or difficult behaviors.

Record Performance

Record how well the student or group performs the behavior. For example, a history instructor wants to decrease the number of talkouts in class. By collecting data, he observes that the class averages 30 talkouts each period. He sets the criterion at 20 per period the first week, 15 the next week, and continues to gradually decrease the number as the students meet the criterion and their behavior improves.



<u>Talk Outs/Day</u>	
Baseline:	30
Week 1:	15
Week 2:	10
Week 3:	5

✓ Choose consequences.

Decide on the Reward

Decide on the reward that will be earned by the group. This is **NOT** a punishment technique. The consequences for meeting the group reinforcement response contingency should always be positive. Students should get something extra if the criterion is met. If it is not met, then the classroom routine should continue as usual without the extra privilege or reward.

Use Student Input

Because a whole group or classroom can earn the reward, the reward should be easily dispensed, inexpensive, and not require a lot of time. Use student input when selecting rewards.

REWARDS	
①	Party
②	Video
③	Recess (extra 15 min.)
④	Game
⑤	Dropping Homework
?	Mystery Motivator

✓ Give feedback.

Include a feedback component to facilitate cooperation. Teacher feedback tells students how well they are doing and helps them to measure their progress. Feedback might include:

- 👉 Marks on a board.
- 👉 Marbles in a jar.
- 👉 Coloring in a section of blocks on a tower each time the group meets its criterion.

Visibility helps.

Examples

Example 1

Mrs. Smith's fifth grade class is constantly talking out, out of their seats, and generally disruptive. Mrs. Smith has posted a written set of rules that addresses these behaviors. She has informed the class they can earn 25 minutes extra recess if less than two rules are broken each period. During instruction, Mrs. Smith praises her students for working quietly and staying in their seats. Each time a rule is broken, Mrs. Smith says the student's name and places a check on the board. At the end of each session, she reviews the number of checks on the board. If the students meet the criterion, Mrs. Smith praises the students and provides the extra recess time during the next recess period. If the students fail to meet the criteria, she informs the students and simply withholds the extra recess time.

Example 2

Mr. Bracken teaches math at a local high school. He has the class work independently on assignments on Mondays and Tuesdays. During this time, he walks around the class and individually assists students. If 80% of the students complete the assignment during independent seat work, he drops a homework assignment for the following day.

Variations of the Technique

- 👉 Ongoing feedback can be delivered to the students in novel ways. A clock or stopwatch can be used to show how much extra time a class has earned as a group.
- 👉 Teams can compete against each other in the classroom. The best group contingencies allows all outcomes:
 - Both teams can win.
 - One team can win.
 - Both teams can lose, depending on their performance.
- 👉 Students can manage group tasks. For example, study groups can be run with a student manager, coach, and scorekeeper, each with a specific role. The manager collects the assignments, the coach tutors peers, and the scorekeeper grades the assignments. If the group meets the criterion, then the whole group earns the reward.

Potential Problems and Solutions

Students Can Sabotage the Group

In some instances, one or two students may decide to sabotage the group reinforcement for the whole class. In such cases, these students can form their own group. When they perform appropriately, they can rejoin the class group.

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure can mount on a particular student who is having difficulty. If this happens, talk with the class and indicate that undo pressure will result in the loss of the classroom reward. Also, make sure the student is capable of performing the required behavior. If not, change the criterion or help the student until he is successful.

Repeated Failure by One Student

If one student frequently fails to meet the contingency for the group but seems genuinely interested in cooperating, then the teacher should examine the criterion. It may help to reset the criterion or set a different criterion for the student having difficulty.

The Procedure Fails After an Initial Success

When this happens, either the consequences are not rewarding, or inappropriate peer influence has increased. Try changing the rewards or privileges by getting student input or adding variety. If peer influence has increased, make the troublesome students a separate team.

Parents or Principal Argue That the Program is Unfair

This occurs when parents or administrators have not been adequately informed about the details of the program. Review the program, emphasizing its positive components. If parents or the principal continue to be concerned, invite them to a meeting to discuss the procedure and modify the program, if necessary.

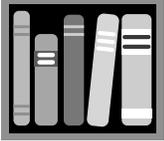
Getting Ready

- Decide if a group contingency is needed. This procedure is best utilized when a student can perform a behavior but **chooses** not to do so (i.e., a motivation problem versus a skill acquisition problem). If other students reward a misbehaving student with their attention or comments, then a group contingency may be needed. Also, if students' cooperation is needed as part of a teacher's classroom management plan, then group contingencies are useful. Group contingencies are **not** useful when a student is struggling to learn a new behavior or skill.
- Before a group contingency is started, it is important to discuss the procedure with the class and the school principal and to inform the parents. A letter to the parents with a permission form explaining the group contingency and asking for consent is an important step to complete before proceeding. The letter should emphasize the cooperative aspect of the group contingency and the anticipated positive outcomes.



Materials and Supplies

-  Defined rewards and privileges.
-  A feedback system for students.
-  Possible use of an instrument (e.g., sound relay, CD player, remote controller, clock).



References

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