How to Use Extrinsic Motivators

Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation operate on distinct spectrums, and high rates of one do not indicate low rates of the other.

*Example:* A student might have an intrinsic interest in the subject matter of her Anatomy class, but she is also interested in getting a good grade (an external motivator) so that she can apply to medical school.

Although it is possible for extrinsic motivators to **diminish** intrinsic motivators, research shows that it is also possible for extrinsic motivation to **complement** other forms of motivation.

For example, extrinsic motivation can foster intrinsic motivation: Achieving grade goals may actually **encourage** increased interest among students.

According to *McKeachie’s Teaching Tips*, “Extrinsic rewards are most beneficial when they contain informative feedback and enable students to focus on improvement” (143).

- Offer comments on graded materials that show students how they can improve their work.
- Take class time when returning tests or papers to show students how they can improve.
- Give enough tests or writing assignments that students have the opportunity to improve over the course of the semester.
- Consider dropping questions missed by a large percentage of students and then reteach that material to show students that grades are meant to measure learning not to penalize or intimidate.
- Feedback should be constructive and posed in ways that regard the student as an active participant in his or her own learning.
- Help students to set realistic goals so that they don’t become overly concerned with grades.
- Ask students to submit self-evaluations to help them figure out how to improve their work.

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