

# JAR OF WINS

## Screen Time & Responsibility System



### Before You Start;

*A quick note before you use this pack*

This pack offers a structured way to link everyday responsibilities to specific rewards, using a small set of core tasks, a visible daily tracker, and a simple weekday-to-weekend rhythm. **It's not just about chores**; the core list can include self-care and daily living tasks (getting dressed, brushing teeth independently), emotional regulation skills (using a calm-down strategy), and connection (including a sibling in play), alongside household jobs. Where screen time is used as the reward, it's built around the Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines, which recommend no more than 2 hours of sedentary recreational screen time per day for children and young people (this system works within that recommended amount rather than adding to it). How this works best varies by child, and it's meant to be reviewed and adjusted over time rather than set and left running unchanged.

### Who it's for?

This version is designed for primary-school-aged children (roughly 5–12), where a parent is setting up and running the system. It tends to suit families who want more structure and predictability around everyday responsibilities, whether the goal is household contribution, self-care independence, or emotional regulation (whether or not ADHD, autism, or executive functioning differences are part of the picture).

### Using this pack

The System Settings Card, Worksheet, and Tracker are designed to be simple to run without any clinical input. The Worksheet helps you build a short list of core tasks tailored to your child, with their input on preferences, not just yours, across whichever areas matter most for your family right now. The Settings Card sets your numbers once, and the Tracker gives your child something physical and visual to interact with each day. A small bonus menu lets your child earn extra on top if they want to, and a Weekend Pass makes the payoff something tangible you hand over, not just a number.

If your family would benefit from extra support putting this into practice, this pack is also used as part of my broader work with parents navigating burnout and compassion fatigue, and the day-to-day load of building routines and responsibilities with their children, including families managing ADHD, autism, and related executive functioning differences.

### Get in touch

I'm a **Registered Psychologist** (Clinical Psychology Registrar) providing telehealth psychology support Australia-Wide Natalie Cullen Psychological Services. Clinical interests: chronic conditions, Autism, ADHD, parental burnout/compassion fatigue.

To get in touch, scan the QR code, visit our website (<https://www.ncullenpsychologicalservices.com.au/>) or call **0495 001 896**



This pack is a general psychoeducational resource and does not constitute individual clinical advice or a guarantee of outcome.

This is not a crisis service; in an emergency, call emergency services (000) or Lifeline on 13 11 14.

# Parent Handout

- **Your child has a protected baseline.**

There's a small, unconditional amount every day (of screen time, or whatever currency you've chosen) that isn't tied to anything. This isn't part of the reward system; it's just theirs.

- **A few core responsibilities are expected. Each one earns a token.**

These can be chores, self-care tasks, a regulation strategy, or a connection habit, whatever matters most for your family right now. If it's done, a token goes in the jar. No judgment calls, no negotiating in the moment; the token's earned the second it's done. If it's not done, nothing is taken away, the jar just fills a little slower that day.

- **Extra tasks are optional, but always available.**

A standing Bonus Task Menu lets your child earn more any time they want to. No need to ask first, no need to be reminded.

- **Count the jar together.**

Add up the tokens. Your child chooses: turn them into extra reward time (up to the cap — see Settings Card), or spend them on something from the Reward Menu. Handing it over is what makes it real, not just a number you've worked out.

- **Your job the rest of the week is small.**

You don't need to track every task every day; the jar does that. Add tokens as they're earned, and run the count-up together. That's it until next week.

## Why it's built this way

Separating what your child always has from what they're actively earning matters: token-economy research shows that consistent, immediate reinforcement for a target behaviour builds new habits more reliably than removing things when something's missed, and removing the "chore" label from self-care or regulation tasks doesn't change the mechanism; the same reinforcement principles apply.

## A couple of myths worth knowing

- "This is just bribery." Bribery is an in-the-moment deal to stop unwanted behaviour. A planned, transparent system your child knows about in advance is standard reinforcement practice, not bribery, and for tasks kids don't already enjoy (most chores, many self-care habits), it isn't linked to reduced motivation the way rewards for already-enjoyable activities can be.
- "Taking things away teaches responsibility better than earning does." The evidence points the other way for building new habits: reward-based, earn-on-top systems tend to outperform taking-away models, and they're gentler on the relationship in the process.

## Tips

- Add tokens in the moment, not at the end of the day; the closer to the action, the more it means.
- Try not to add extra tokens or bend the rules mid-week; consistency is what makes this work.
- The weekend cap is a genuine ceiling, not a target; it keeps total screen time within guidelines even in a perfect week.
- Notice effort on regulation or self-care items, not just the end result: a child can't fully control how they feel, only what they try.
- If it's not working after a few weeks, that's useful information; bring it to review rather than pushing harder on the current version.

*Evidence: token economy and contingency management literature (applied behaviour analysis); Deci & Ryan, self-determination theory, on reward and intrinsic motivation.*

## JAR OF WINS

## Core Responsibilities Worksheet

For building your child's core list; complete before setting up their Tracker.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 1 — Brainstorm (don't filter yet)

*List everything currently expected of your child, or that you'd like to build in, across household jobs, self-care (getting dressed, brushing teeth), emotional regulation (using a calm-down strategy), and connection (including a sibling in play), regardless of how consistently it's happening now. Ask your child for input where it makes sense; they often know what's realistic better than it seems.*

| # | Responsibility | Currently consistent?<br>(Y/N/Sometimes) |
|---|----------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1 |                |                                          |
| 2 |                |                                          |
| 3 |                |                                          |
| 4 |                |                                          |
| 5 |                |                                          |
| 6 |                |                                          |
| 7 |                |                                          |
| 8 |                |                                          |

## Step 2 — Screen each one

*Carry forward responsibilities from Step 1. Screen each against three criteria — kept deliberately practical, since the point is a system you can actually run, not a perfect one. (See notes on next page for more details on screening process)*

[illegible]

## Screening notes:

- "Observable" = N → not a strong candidate for the core list; it forces real verification instead of a glance.
- "Initiation, not skill gap" = N → teach and practise it first; add it once it's genuinely independent.
- "Realistic every day" = N → better suited to the Bonus Task Menu.
- For emotional-regulation items, phrase what made the list as the strategy attempted ("used calm-down card") not the outcome ("stayed calm"); a child can control the attempt, not always the feeling.

## Step 3 — Finalise the core list (3–5)

*Fewer, well-chosen items beat a long list. Every item earns 1 token when done — kept uniform to keep the system simple.*

| # | Responsibility | When (anchor point) | Tokens | Why this made the list |
|---|----------------|---------------------|--------|------------------------|
| 1 |                |                     | 1      |                        |
| 2 |                |                     | 1      |                        |
| 3 |                |                     | 1      |                        |
| 4 |                |                     | 1      |                        |
| 5 |                |                     | 1      |                        |

*"When" works best as a daily anchor your child already recognises — 'before dinner', 'before school', 'before bed' — rather than a clock time.*

## Step 4 — Build the Bonus Task Menu

*Optional extratask your child can do anytime for extra tokens. Price by roughly how much effort each takes, and lean toward things they'd actually want to do.*

| Bonus task | Est. time | Tokens | Notes (interest alignment) |
|------------|-----------|--------|----------------------------|
|            |           |        |                            |
|            |           |        |                            |
|            |           |        |                            |
|            |           |        |                            |
|            |           |        |                            |
|            |           |        |                            |
|            |           |        |                            |
|            |           |        |                            |
|            |           |        |                            |

## Step 5 — Final checks before you start

- ☐ 3–5 items on the core list, no more
- ☐ Every core item is quick and simple to notice
- ☐ None of the core items are actually skill gaps in disguise
- ☐ Each "when" is an anchor your child recognises, not a clock time
- ☐ At least one item reflects an area beyond household chores, if relevant for your family
- ☐ Bonus Task Menu reflects at least some of your child's own interests
- ☐ Reward Menu built together — ask what they'd actually want

*Revisit this worksheet at review if core items are consistently unmet despite the system running as designed, that usually points to a mis-sorted item (a skill gap, not an initiation one), not a reason to add consequences.*

Set once, review periodically

# JAR OF WINS

## System Settings Card



**System Start Date:**

**Next Review Date:**

### Reward Currency Settings

|                                                               |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Weekday baseline (unconditional, Mon–Fri)                     | ___ min/day |
| Weekend baseline (unconditional, Sat–Sun)                     | ___ min/day |
| Token value (banked toward weekend, or spent via Reward Menu) | ___ min     |
| Weekend cap (baseline + all banked tokens, combined)          | ___ min/day |

*These numbers apply every week unless changed at a review; don't adjust mid-week.*

### Suggested starting points

The Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines recommend no more than 2 hours of sedentary recreational screen time per day for children and young people (this doesn't include screen time needed for schoolwork). Even with a full week of banked tokens, the weekend cap keeps total screen time within the recommended daily limit; the cap always wins, so ideally set it at or under 120 min/day regardless of how generous the token value is.

Flex it: **screen time doesn't have to be the only thing tokens buy**. If it's not the right motivator for your child, set the token value and run everything through the Reward Menu instead. The jar mechanic works either way identically; it just pays out in privileges or small treats rather than minutes.

### Notes for setting your numbers

- Start conservative on both the baseline and the token value; it's far easier to raise them at a review than to walk them back once your child is used to them.
- Keep the weekday and weekend baselines separate from the token economy in your own head, too. They're your child's regardless of performance, and treating them that way (not as a "starting amount that gets earned back") is what keeps the floor genuinely protective.
- If you're running more than one child on the system, each child gets their own Settings Card; don't assume the same numbers suit siblings of different ages.

Set once, review periodically

# JAR OF WINS

## System Settings Card



### Weekly Rhythm

| When                      | What happens                                                                                            |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Daily                     | Add a token to the jar for each core responsibility done, in the moment it's done                       |
| Friday / Saturday morning | Count up the jar together. Choose: bank tokens as weekend screen time, or spend them on the Reward Menu |
| Saturday–Sunday           | Weekend baseline + whatever was chosen at settlement applies, capped at the weekend cap                 |

### Tips for implementation

- Add tokens as they're earned, not retrospectively at the end of the day — immediacy is what makes the token mean something.
- Keep the jar itself somewhere visible; the physical, cumulative visual is doing real work here, not just decoration.
- If a token value feels "too small" to your child in the first week or two, resist raising it immediately — give the system 2–3 weeks before judging whether the numbers need adjusting at review.
- If most days end with an empty-ish jar, that's a signal to revisit the Worksheet screening (Step 2) before changing the reward numbers — a consistently unmet item is more often a mis-sorted item than a motivation problem.

### Worked Example

Weekday baseline 30 min/day. Token value 10 min. Weekend baseline 60 min/day. Weekend cap 120 min/day. If your child earns all 5 core tokens on a weekday, that's 50 min banked for the weekend — spread across Saturday and Sunday, still under the 120 min/day cap.

*Evidence: Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Young People, on screen time caps; Skinner and Kazdin, operant conditioning and token economy literature, on reinforcement immediacy and token salience; Barkley, ADHD as a performance disorder, on unmet items reflecting initiation rather than knowledge gaps.*

# My Core Responsibilities

Do these, earn a token for your jar



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

| Task | Description | Photo / Picture |
|------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1.   |             |                 |
| 2.   |             |                 |
| 3.   |             |                 |
| 4.   |             |                 |
| 5.   |             |                 |

Want to earn extra? Check the Bonus Task Menu

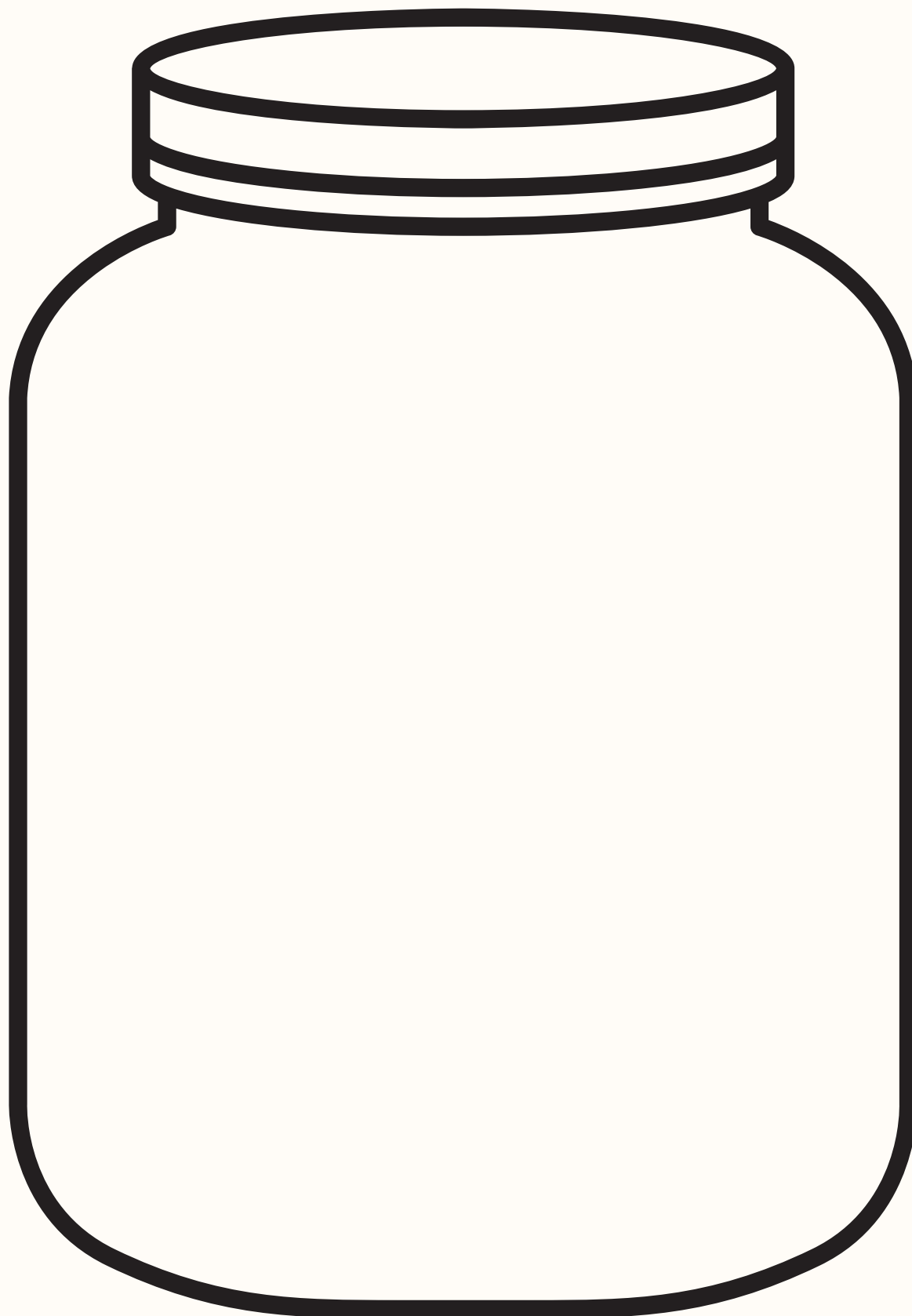
Count up your jar and turn it into bonus weekend screen time or other fun rewards

*Add a photo or picture next to each task as a visual reminder of what it looks like; handy for kids who read better with pictures than words, or who need a clear example of 'done.'*

# My Jar

Decorate it, then watch it fill up all week

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# My Jar

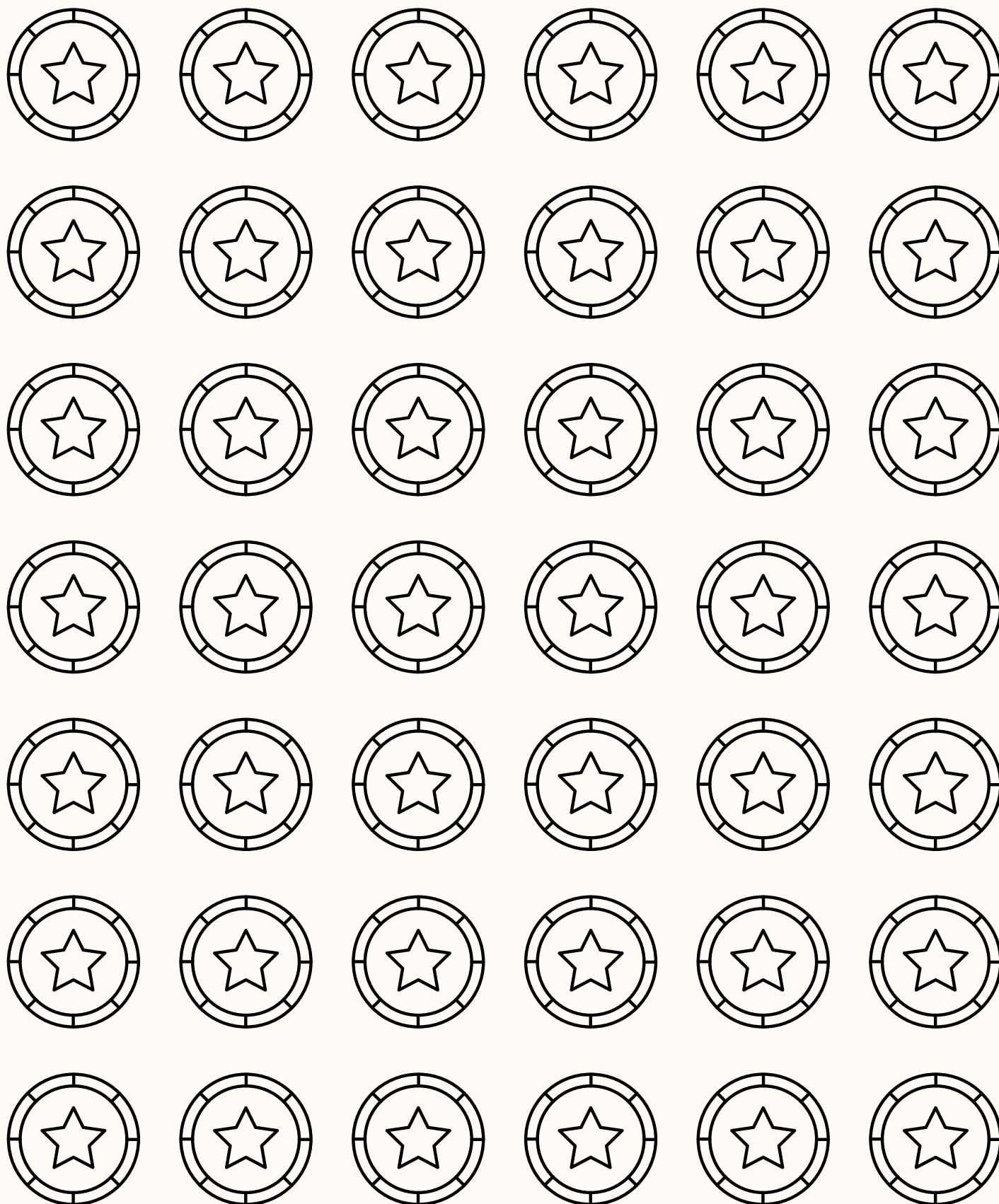
Decorate it, then watch it fill up all week

**Add a token to the jar every time you finish a task. By Friday, however full your jar is, that's what turns into extra weekend screen time or other fun rewards.**

**Flex it:** the printed jar is one option, not the only one. Some families print and colour this page; others prefer a real jar on the kitchen bench with pom-poms, buttons, or marbles dropped in by hand. The physical "plink" of something going in can be even more motivating for younger children. A magnetic chart, a bead string, or a simple sticker row works just as well. The only thing that actually matters for the system to work is that it's visible, cumulative, and added to immediately; the container itself is entirely up to you.

# My Tokens

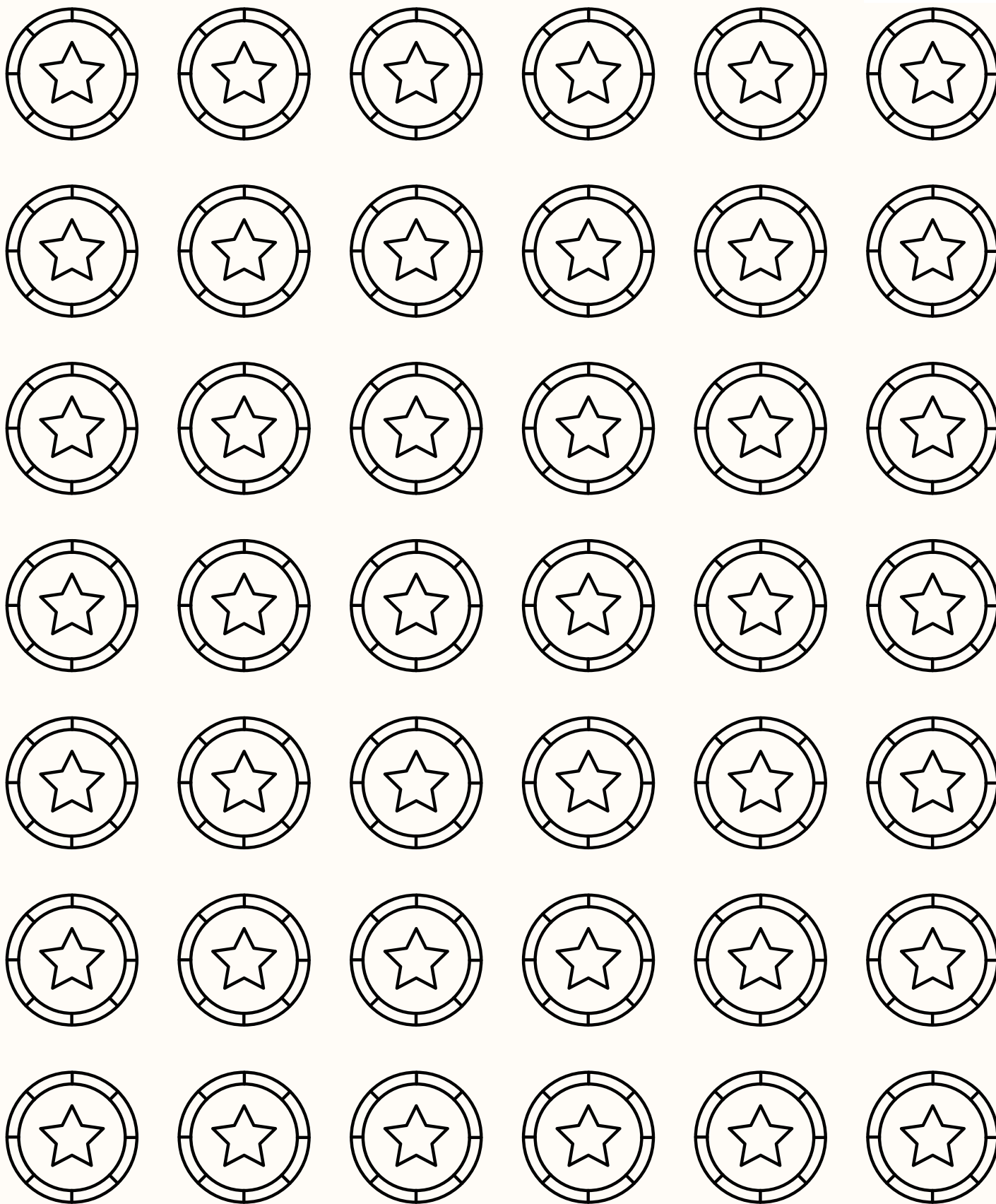
Colour them in if you like, then cut them out



One token goes in the jar every time a task on your list is done

# My Tokens

Colour them in if you like, then cut them out



Flex it: paper tokens are the simplest option; no extra materials needed, and cutting them out can be a nice shared activity before you start. If you'd rather not deal with paper (or your child loses pieces easily), swap in whatever you already have on hand: pom-poms, buttons, coins, or counters all work the same way. Digitally-minded families sometimes prefer a tally on a whiteboard or a simple counter app instead; the token doesn't need to be physical at all, as long as your child can see it accumulate.

**Natalie Cullen**  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

# JAR OF WINS

## Bonus Task Menu

**Ideas to help get started** (mix from any domain; bonus tasks don't have to be chores):

- Household: wipe the table, water a plant, help pack lunches, feed pets
- Self-care: pack tomorrow's bag without being reminded, tidy own room
- Regulation: use a calm-down strategy without being prompted, help a sibling calm down
- Connection: read to a younger sibling, help plan a family activity

**Flex it:** price by roughly how much effort or time each task takes, and lean toward things your child would actually want to do. A bonus menu stacked entirely with unappealing extras won't get used. Update it occasionally as interests change.

Log bonus tasks the same day they're done, not retrospectively. That immediacy matters more here than for the core list, since bonus tasks are unprompted and easy to forget by settlement day if not recorded straight away.



# JAR OF WINS

# Reward Menu

Save your tokens, then choose: extra screen time, or something from this list



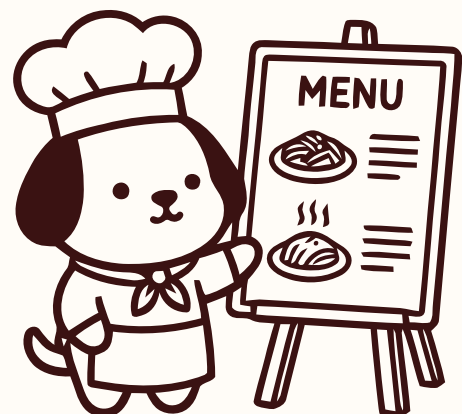
| Reward | Description / Picture | Tokens |
|--------|-----------------------|--------|
|        |                       |        |

# Prefer screen time?

**1 token = \_\_\_\_\_ minutes**

Up to a maximum of \_\_\_\_\_ **minutes**  
on top of the weekend baseline

Weekend cap on your Settings Card is the hard limit (it always wins, even if the token maths would allow more)



# JAR OF WINS

## Reward Menu

**Ideas to help get started** (non-screen options are worth including even if screen time is the main draw/currency; it keeps the system flexible for days when the cap is already reached):

- A small treat or trip (ice cream, park visit)
- Choosing dinner one night
- A later bedtime on the weekend
- 1:1 time with a parent doing something they choose
- A small saved-for purchase (set a higher token price)

**Flex it:** this menu matters more than it might look. It's what stops the whole system from collapsing into "just about screen time" once the weekend cap is reached in a good week. If your child rarely hits the cap, a short menu is fine; if they regularly do, build this out properly so there's always something worth earning toward.

