DOG ON A LOG® Play Money

From
Teaching A Struggling Reader:
One Mom's Experience with Dyslexia
By Pamela Brookes

Rewards as a Motivator

From the beginning, my daughter's specialist gave her $1 in play money for every effort she made. It was not for correct answers, but for effort. This was really critical. Every time my daughter tried, she got $1. Often in an hour session she would get $100. In time my daughter got paid a lump sum (usually $100) at the end of the session. I stocked rewards she could buy with her play money. Initially, I kept small items in a treasure box that she could look through at the end of each session. They would cost about $100 each. It was stuff she would like from the dollar store or a thrift store. When time passed and she asked for more expensive items, I told her she would have to save up. A $5 throw blanket cost her $500 in play money. Leaving a session without any reward was not realistic. So she would be able to get a reward, I kept a small bag of yogurt covered pretzels. They were $5 each and she could buy 2 of them per session. She'd usually choose to spend $10 on pretzels and save the rest for the big item she wanted.

That was in the sessions with her specialist. We tried various versions of this at home. Ultimately, my secret weapon was a piece of gum. My daughter would read for a piece of gum. One time I found out my husband had bought her an entire pack of gum. I panicked that I would not have a reward for her. Fortunately, she loved gum enough that she rapidly ate it and remained enthusiastic to earn the gum I bought.

Within a year or so, my daughter decided she did not need the rewards any more. Her teacher had said that would happen as it does with most kids. On rare occasions I need to offer rewards, but that is truly rare.

I have created Tup Money. They come in sheets of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, and 500. They intentionally all look the same except for the denomination written on them. I have not indicated if they are dollars, pounds, rupees, etc. so they can be used in any country. My daughter learned a lot about money, adding, and skip counting by figuring out how much money she had at the end of a tutoring session. After a while, I encouraged her to save for something big to teach delayed gratification and saving. I did NOT do this at the very beginning. I kept forgetting to bring coins, but I think she would have learned coins if she'd used them as her motivators.

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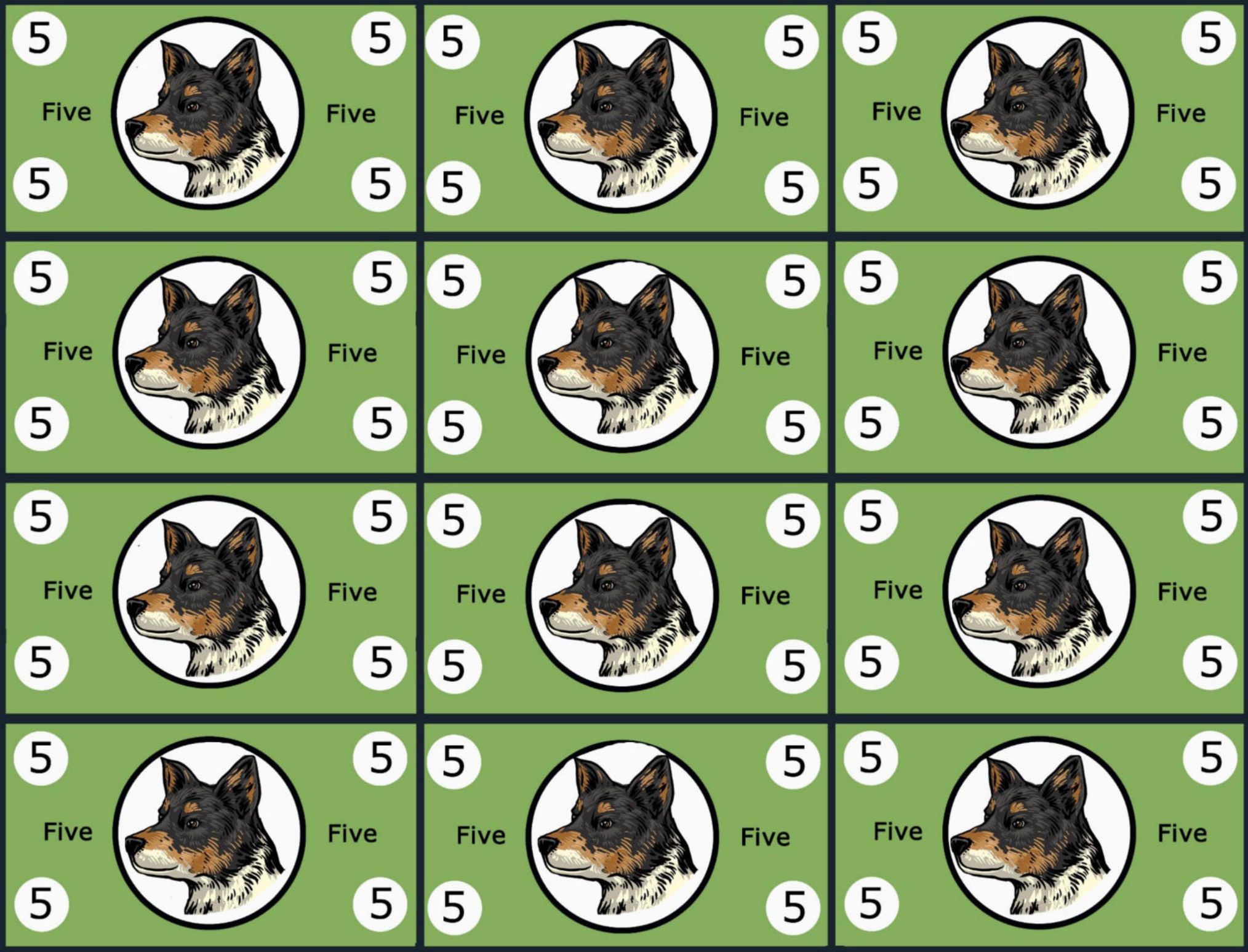
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