

Household Tasks for Kids



With all the demands of parenting there is often less time to devote to household chores. Don't fret - children can play an important part in creating a home that runs smoothly.

Children who regularly do household tasks learn to accept responsibilities. When kids fulfill responsibilities, they gain self-respect and learn competence. Children soon realize that certain jobs depend on them. And it's a good feeling for your child to know that he contributes to the family. It's best to lay the groundwork when children are young, but it's never too late to begin. Explain to your children that responsibilities of running the home should be shared. **Chores should be a part of family life, not a punishment.**

Here are some strategies for involving children in household maintenance.

- Do let your children be involved in decision-making. Responsibilities should be divided equally and fairly. Compile a list of who does what. If your child doesn't do his designated tasks, don't do them for him. Eventually, he'll get the feeling that his efforts are important to the overall functioning of the family.
- Don't stick your child with the same old job day in and day out. As the old saying goes, variety is the spice of life. Give him different jobs to do, and he'll learn valuable and lasting skills.
- Don't complain that your child doesn't do it "right." He'll be less likely to help out willingly. Rarely will any child do a job as well as a parent might, but don't complain. With younger children, you'll need patience because, as a beginner, children will need to learn over and over how to do a particular job. Be generous with your praise.
- Do put work before fun to get children motivated. Make a time for work and give advance notice of upcoming work periods. This will help children accept assignments and plan other activities around home responsibilities.
- Do teach proper work methods. Keep any unsafe supplies in another location. Avoid bringing up past mistakes. Use yourself as a model. Be patient, the more your child does something, the easier it will become.
- Children are usually capable of doing much more than is asked of them, so don't be afraid to assign more than one task. The older children get, the more they are capable of doing.
- Do discover what your child's style is. Does he work better alone or with others?

Is he a reader or a listener? Does he like step-by-step instructions or does he like to discover the best way to do something on his own? If your child likes to read, chances are he'll respond better to a written list of chores and instructions.

- Go with your child's styles and he will be more willing to cooperate. Younger children tend to be more family-oriented and will enjoy working with a parent.
- Do break larger jobs down into parts. Don't tell your 13-year-old to do the laundry without first showing him how to sort the clothes, operate the washer, select the proper drying procedure and fold the laundry.

Everyone in the family should have a part of running the household. The knowledge, skills and sense of responsibility children gain will last them a lifetime.

This article was reprinted from Single Parenting in the Nineties -copyright 1995 by Pilot Publishing.