

# Questions & Answers about children's chores

It is never too early or too late to begin teaching children to help with chores. Involving children in family chores helps them feel they are a part of the family and that people need their help. Working also helps children develop skills such as keeping their word, planning ahead, following through, organizing their time, and doing several tasks at once. Doing chores helps children become responsible and feel good about themselves and about helping others.

## 1. How should I teach my child to do chores?

Begin by doing activities together and making the experience fun. Be sure to match the job to the ability of your child so that he or she can be successful. Also, choose chores that have meaning for children. Take time and patience in working with children until they learn a new chore. Even if you could do the chore much faster and better, give children the opportunity to learn. Children aren't born with the ability to do jobs quickly and correctly. In the beginning, it may take more time and work on your part to have children help you. If you send them out to play while you do all the

chores, they don't learn to work—instead, they learn that they are not really needed.

After you have worked together with children and feel they are ready to do a job alone, let them know you are available if they need help and fade into the background. Make sure children have kid-sized equipment for their work. Praise their efforts more for the contribution they are making than the quality of their work.

## 2. What should I do when the newness wears off?

Children may think chores are fun at first, but once the newness wears off, it is important to teach children to continue. Par-

ents can share with children that not all activities in life are fun, but they are necessary in order to keep the family running smoothly. Sticking to a chore and finishing it, even if it isn't fun, helps children develop self-esteem and to see themselves as responsible individuals. Creating a "chore time" when everyone works together may also make the experience more enjoyable for everyone.

## 3. I have three children ages 9, 7, and 6. How should we decide who does what chores around the house?

There are several ways to divide chores among several children. First, make sure your children can do the job you give them. You can have a family meeting and make a list of jobs to be done in the family. Children can volunteer for the jobs they feel they can do best. You can also rotate less enjoyable tasks such as taking out the trash. Another method would be to write each chore on a piece of paper and put them in a box. Let each child pick two chores that he will do for the next week. New chores are then chosen at the beginning of each new week.

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#### **4. What are some appropriate chores for school-aged children?**

Here is a sample list of chores which school-aged children should be able to do with teaching and guidance from parents:

- Helping with grocery shopping
- Setting and clearing the table
- Helping with simple food preparation (making toast, stirring cookie dough, pouring drinks)
- Making a simple breakfast or lunch
- Washing dishes
- Putting away dishes
- Dusting furniture
- Separating clothes for washing
- Watering plants and flowers
- Gathering wood for the fireplace
- Feeding and walking pets
- Washing the family car
- Cleaning their rooms
- Making beds and vacuuming

#### **5. Should I give my children rewards for doing chores?**

Completing a chore and doing it correctly should be a reward in itself. Accepting the responsibility for helping with chores teaches children that there are routine tasks that are done in order to help the family. In addition, children learn to contribute to the household by doing these chores.

#### **6. My son and daughter get really busy during the school year with after-school activities. Should I do their chores for them**

#### **during this time?**

Parents should not do children's jobs for them because they have a lot of homework and other activities. Instead, help them to organize their time so that they can continue to help the family. This is a skill they will need to know as they grow into adulthood.

#### **7. What should I do when my 8-year-old son forgets his chores?**

Leaving a list of chores posted in the kitchen will help remind children of what needs to be done. You may also want to make a chart where children check off each chore as it is done. Delaying fun activities until after chores are done can also be effective. "Yes, you are welcome to go play basketball with Alex—after your chores are done."

Another effective way to remind children of chores is to show what happens when chores go undone. If they have forgotten to set the table, then the family sits down to eat with no plates. If they fail to clean their rooms, children may not be able to find their school supplies or favorite toys.

#### **Sources:**

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