

TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY

RESOURCE TO HELP FAMILIES WITH KIDS OF ANY AGE



STRUCTURE AND ROUTINE

BY CHRISTINE CLARK

Have you ever asked your child to take out the trash, only to come back a few hours later and find the trash still there? This leaves you with two choices: You can either remind and nag your child to do what you asked, or do it yourself. Neither of these are good options, but there are days when it just seems too hard. This guide will encourage you to use chores as a way to share the load and teach responsibility.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

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Why household chores?

02

Guide to Age-Appropriate Activities

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Additional Resources

WHY HOUSEHOLD CHORES?

Chores meet an essential human emotional need—the need to feel needed. As children learn to participate in the operation of their home, they are recognizing their valuable contribution to the family. It helps reduce their sense of entitlement when they better understand the effort required. And finally, when children are held accountable for the completion of chores they are learning responsibility.

That's a lot of value for a small effort!



We need to recognize that there is a difference between a chore (an ongoing task that benefits the household) and a "life skill" (an activity that children should know how to do before living on their own, such as handling money). One activity can meet both objectives but in the case of chores our motive is to teach responsibility not just mastery of a skill.

**Our children are
the future - teach
them well.**



Kids need to perform certain tasks around the house simply because they are part of the family. This could include jobs such as taking care of their own rooms, picking up their toys, helping to prepare meals, washing their own clothes, and yes, even taking out the trash.

GUIDE TO AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES



Two and Three

At this age you want to make helping Mom and Dad fun. Use games and songs such as the "Clean Up Song" to get them involved. Chores will need your supervision, but be careful to let them do it themselves.

- Clean up and put away playthings and supplies
- Make their own bed
- Carry dirty laundry to the hamper
- Put bath toys and towels away
- Dust surfaces

Four and Five

One of the most common phrases at this age is "I can't..." so our goal is to help them gain confidence that they can. Resist the temptation to go behind them and straighten their bed or rehang the towels.

- Get dressed
- Make their bed
- Bring their things from the car to the house
- Set the table with supervision
- Help a parent carry in the lighter groceries
- Sort colors for the laundry
- Match socks after clothing is washed
- Hang up towels in the bathroom
- Clean floors with a dry mop



GUIDE TO AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES



Six and Seven

At this age it is easy to overwhelm them. Most kids are not natural process thinkers at this age. So as they take on more responsibility for self care and more complex tasks be sure to break them down into simple steps. Consider using charts for routines like getting ready for bed.

- Make their bed every day and clean up their room
- Pack backpack and prepare supplies for the next day's activities
- Responsible for pet food, water, and exercise
- Put their laundry away
- Put away dishes from the dishwasher
- Empty trash cans
- Damp mop or vacuum floors
- Bring in the mail and delivered boxes

Eight to Eleven

This is the age of personal responsibility. They are laser focused on their own needs and comfort, and not so much on the greater needs of the family. This is a good time to re-enforce taking care of their own business as well as challenging them to see the needs of others

- Take care of personal hygiene
- Manage their own homework
- Wake up to their own alarm
- Prepare their own breakfast
- Wash dishes or load dishwasher
- Prepare simple meals for the family
- Take the trash cans out to the curb
- Clean bathrooms
- Water inside and outside plants
- Wash laundry



GUIDE TO AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES



Twelve and Thirteen

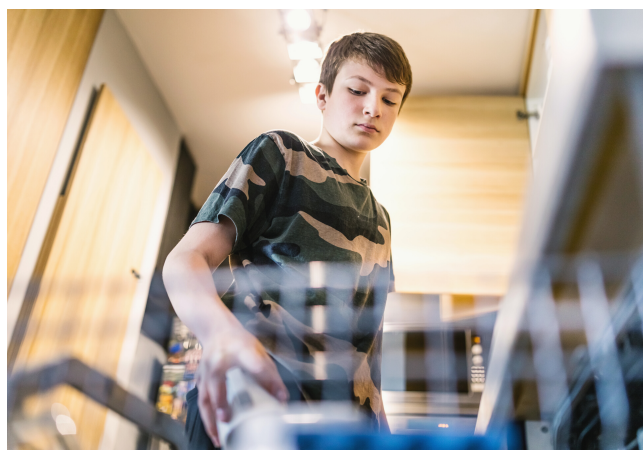
By this point the mechanics of most tasks have been mastered. The focus should start to shift to an awareness of "what needs to be done vs. what I am required to do." This is a great time to introduce extra chores/big jobs for cash type programs. (See Additional Resources for some suggestions.)

- Maintain personal items such as charging phone, tablets and gaming equipment
- Manage personal belongings such as sports equipment, school supplies, etc.
- Make their own lunch
- Be responsible for cleaning whole rooms of the house in addition to their bedroom
- Mow the lawn
- Babysit for friends or family
- Perform odd jobs for additional income

Fourteen to Eighteen

Although our teens are busy with their own lives it is important to remind them they are still part of the family and they have family responsibilities. They should be able to operate fully in the day to day management of home and family without prompting.

- Perform household chores without prompting
- Mow lawns, babysit, pet sit, or maintain a job to earn personal spending money
- Prepare regular family meals including planning, shopping and preparing meals
- Responsible for maintaining any car they drive (e.g., gas, oil changes, tire pressure, etc.)
- Responsible for regular cleaning of rooms or portions of the home
- Responsible for personal or family laundry



RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPLEMENT A NEW SYSTEM IN YOUR FAMILY



Plan to Implement Chores and Shared Responsibility in our Homes

1. Assess your child's ability and willingness to participate in family chores. Some children are natural helpers and others are reluctant participants. Some kids are developmentally ready to unload the dishwasher while others may only be able to clear the table.
2. Add one chore at a time, focusing on integrating that activity into their regular routine. Start with chores that are part of daily personal and household management. For example, dishes need to be done every day, meals prepared three times a day, floors cleaned regularly, etc.
3. Be consistent. Do not change your mind, or "be nice" and not hold them responsible today but then again the next day.
4. Set expectations of how a chore should be completed, realizing with age and experience the standard of performance can be increased.
5. Consistently apply consequences for non-performance so they understand what happens when they do not do their chore. For example, if they do not put their toys away, they lose the privilege of playing with that toy for a week.
6. Integrate chores into the family's routine. If it is your family's routine to clean house on Saturday morning, then give everyone in the family a role to play. One mom talked about the daily five minute clean up, where everyone in the house spends five minutes before the end of the day picking up, putting away and decluttering to allow the family to start fresh the following day.

*** Mark your calendar now for National Clean Your Room Day on May 10th for a special family clean your room celebration.*

Use on a magnetic board listing both daily and weekly chores to be completed allowing your family to move the magnets from the "to do" to the "done" catagory.

NAME: _____

DAILY CHORES

TO DO

DONE

WEEKLY CHORES

TO DO

DONE

Use this each month to print new chores and responsibilities for different family members.

NAME: _____

CHORE CHART

DAILY

M T W T F S S

WEEKLY

MONTHLY

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



1. **From Bad Grades to a Great Life!** by *Dr. Charles Fay* - Put an end to the arguing and nagging about homework: help your child discover, on their own, the rewards of hard work, determination, and personal achievement.
2. **Focus on the Family – Why Have Age-Appropriate Chores?**
<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/age-appropriate-chores/>
3. **Somewhat Simple** – Website with lots of great ideas and free printables that can be customized for you and your family. <https://www.somewhatsimple.com/>
4. **Homegrown Traditions** - Website with great ideas for home and family and lots of printables including a great idea for money for chores.
<https://homegrowntraditions.com/family-money-system-free-printable/>
5. **Cleaning House** by *Kay Wills Wyma* - A Mom's 12-month experiment to rid her home of your entitlement

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