

## Upcoming Events:

February 6, 2012  
Co-Parenting for  
Successful Kids Class  
3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
Norfolk, Nebraska

## Children and Chores: The basics

Many parents want children to have regular chores. Even when parents do not involve kids in chores – they believe they should!

### Parents give kids chores to help them:

- Learn responsibility. Most people believe work is good for kids.
- Contribute. Everyone needs to pitch in and help the family.
- Share the workload. You may believe that kids that help clean will make fewer messes.
- Learn skills. Your child will know how to cook, clean and do household tasks.
- Earn money. Your child may need money, and you feel he should earn it.

Positive skills like helping, sharing and showing concern for others can be learned when children participate in household tasks. When primary school children were asked why they do household chores, most replied “to help,” not “because I have to” or “to get money.”

Although parents may start teaching children to pick up after themselves, they gain more “helping” skills when the work they do benefits others. Things like taking care of a pet, helping prepare meals, or providing some care for younger siblings are examples of being helpful.

Children feel rewarded by doing work that's really needed and contributes to their family. A parent's praise and cash rewards are needed less often when a child feels the satisfaction of making a difference.

There can be challenges when involving your child in household chores. You will have to make choices that work for your family.

### Parents choose not to assign chores because:

- ◆ “Childhood is for play” or “You're only young once”.
- ◆ Schoolwork is a priority. Chores take time away from homework.
- ◆ It's easier to do the job yourself. Allowing your child to help with chores takes a lot of time and patience.
- ◆ They may not do it “your way.” It may mean giving up some control. Sometimes it's best to realize there are many ways to hang a shirt.

### How Much Work and What Jobs?

The chores a child can do and the amount of time spent on tasks varies with the child's age and the family's expectations. Researchers have found children as young as 18 months offer to help with household tasks. By the time they are 9 or 10, well over 90 percent are involved in regular chores.

It can be difficult to decide what chores your child is capable of completing. When assigning chores for children, keep these points in mind.

- Each child develops at his own pace. There are no absolute ages for children to be able to perform tasks.
- Be sure the child is physically able to do the task. Can the child reach the shelf or push the vacuum? Perhaps you can lower the shelf or use a broom to sweep the floor.
- Keep it simple and manageable. Let your younger child start by carrying laundry to the wash area or folding towels. Add steps as skills develop, like sorting items and filling the machines.
- Keep safety in mind. Make sure the task does not pose a risk of harm to the child. Ask yourself: “is it hot, breakable, sharp or something that might cause a fall?”
- Be reasonable in your expectations, but encourage participation. Younger children may not be expected to prepare an entire meal, but might help wash vegetables or prepare a peanut butter sandwich for snack time.
- Encourage chores that benefit others. Feeding the dog, getting the mail, or picking up sticks encourages helpfulness. Don't limit tasks to brushing teeth or cleaning the bedroom.
- Reminders are needed. Children often need reminding that it is their turn to dust or to place dirty socks in the hamper. A chore chart is one way to help children to keep track of chores. They can check off what's done and see what's left to do.
- Encourage your child's effort. Praise sincere effort, even when it does not meet your expectations. Time and encouragement are needed to help your child master the task. Be sure not to redo a child's work as this can discourage future efforts.
- Remember to say thank you. Showing appreciation is a great way to nurture your relationship with your children.

### Specific Chores for Children

Are you trying to decide what tasks to assign? Here are a few ideas of chores for various aged children. The list begins with simple tasks younger children can do. As your child matures and develops more skills, you can advance to jobs that are more difficult. As they get older you may want to develop a routine chore list to specify what days which chores should be completed. You can use this list as a starting point and talk with your child about additional ideas.



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|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Put away toys, games, & clothes  | ■ Make bed            | ■ Make own snacks      |
| ■ Assist in meal preparation       | ■ Keep bedroom tidy   | ■ Sweep and mop floors |
| ■ Empty wastebaskets               | ■ Put away groceries  | ■ Take pet for a walk  |
| ■ Help set and clear table         | ■ Vacuum              | ■ Iron clothes         |
| ■ Fold towels and washcloths       | ■ Dust furniture      | ■ Clean bathroom       |
| ■ Use washer/dryer with directions | ■ Water plants        | ■ Prepare simple meals |
| ■ Cook simple food (such as toast) | ■ Sort laundry        | ■ Clean kitchen        |
| ■ Fold and put away laundry        | ■ Set and clear table | ■ Wash car             |
| ■ Help make and pack lunch         | ■ Help prepare dinner | ■ Mow lawn             |

Source: <http://parenting247.org>