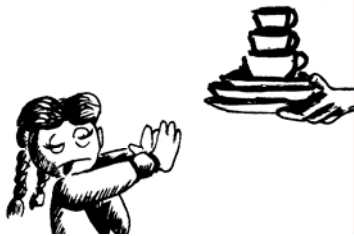


CHILDREN AND CHORES



Many parents require their children to do chores around the house. For some families, the process of teaching children what to do and how to do it is an easy one. In other families, getting children to do chores regularly and completely can be a problem.

It is a good idea for parents to teach their children at an early age that all family members must work together to make the household run, and that each person must do his or her share of the work load. This can be done by beginning a program of chores and responsibilities when children are young.

Chores are beneficial for children - even very young ones. Being responsible for doing chores teaches children many important skills such as cooperation and responsibility. Chores also teach children about

fairness and commitment. The skills and values learned by doing chores will benefit children throughout their lives.

What To Do

There are many things that parents can do to encourage their children to do household chores. Here are some suggestions:

***Start early.** Parents should start giving their children household responsibilities when they are young. Most toddlers love to help their parents. Parents should take advantage of this desire and give their children small and simple tasks. As children get older, they should then be given more challenging tasks.

***Show how to do the chore.** Children need to know exactly what's expected of them. Therefore, it is a good idea for parents to make sure their children know exactly what their duties are. Parents should thoroughly go over the duties required, and should actually show their children how to do the chore at hand. It might also be a good idea to write down and post all duties that make up a single chore for children's reference. At first, parents should monitor their children to make sure things are

going well. Parents can reduce monitoring once children know how to do the chore.

***Teach one chore at a time.** It is probably a good idea for parents to thoroughly teach their children how to do one chore, and then to make sure that they are consistently doing it correctly before moving on to other chores. Young children can become confused when they are required to learn too much at one time.

***Break down the chore into small parts.** When teaching chores, parents should break each one down into small parts. For example, instead of telling a child to clean his bedroom and leaving it at that, parents should list all of the things that make up the chore of cleaning the bedroom, for example, changing the sheets, picking up toys and putting them away, dusting the dresser, and vacuuming. Parents should then show their children how to do each part of the chore correctly.

***Explain.** Children need to know why pitching in and helping is important. Parents should explain that doing chores benefits the whole family, and that every person must do his or

her part to keep things going smoothly.

***Change the nature of chores as children grow.** As children grow, they can be given more and more challenging chores. Most parents have a good idea of what their children are and are not able to do. Therefore, parents should make sure that the chores they give their children are appropriate to their children's ages and abilities.

***Monitor at first.** At first, parents should make sure they are available to answer questions and give guidance should their children need it. At first, parents can inspect their children's work to make sure the job is being done correctly. The younger children are, the more supervision they will need. After children have become accustomed to their new duties, parents can cut back on monitoring and inspecting. Older children can be given complete responsibility for completion of chores.

***Set up a reward system or a chart system.** If parents have trouble getting their children to do their chores or to do them correctly, a reward/chart system can be set up to encourage cooperation. The general guidelines include making a

list of the criteria for successful completion of the chore. Then, a chart should be posted in a prominent location in the home. Parents, or children, if they're old enough, should make a mark on the chart for each completed chore. Parents can either award points that can be traded in for a desired reward, or they can simply give a desired reward in exchange for the completion of agreed-upon chores. Finally, parents and children should decide on the reward to be awarded. Instead of material rewards like candy or toys, it is better if rewards are non-material, such as a trip to the park with Mom and Dad, or being allowed to stay up a half hour past bedtime. Prizes can be awarded daily or weekly. For younger children, it is probably best to have daily rewards. For older children, rewards can be given weekly. Once children are consistently doing their chores, the reward/chart system can be discontinued.

***Provide logical consequences.** Instead of, or in addition to, a reward/chart system, parents can apply logical consequences. Logical consequences occur naturally as a result of children's actions. For example, if a child repeatedly forgets to put his bike away at the end of the day, a logical consequence

would be not being allowed to use the bicycle for a few days. On the other hand, a logical consequence for a child who repeatedly works hard and completes his chores would be to be given special play time. Parents and children should decide upon consequences in advance. Parents should always follow through on applying consequences, whether they are positive or negative.

***Don't repeatedly remind or nag.** Parents should try to avoid falling into the trap of repeatedly reminding and/or nagging their children to complete their chores. Such reminding puts the responsibility for completion of the chores on the parents. Instead, parents should make sure that their children are given the sole responsibility for the completion of their chores. If a child forgets or refuses to do a chore, parents should say nothing and simply apply the consequences.

***Don't do the chore if your child forgets or refuses.** Parents should not do their children's work for them. If parents get frustrated and give in and do their children's chores, children learn a number of things. First of all, children learn that their parents don't mean what they say and will not follow through.

Secondly, children learn that if they hold out long enough someone will do their chores for them. Parents should simply apply consequences until their children comply.

***Provide lots of praise.** Parents should always provide lots of praise and encouragement when their children make an effort to do their chores. Parents should keep praising, even after their children have been consistently doing a chore well.



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