



# Chores Summary

## Why Chores?

Chores allow your child to play a role in contributing to the maintenance and care of your family's household. Daily chores are a way for your child to learn and practice valuable skills like timeliness, work ethic, and responsibility.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

## Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

Consider what chores need to be done. You might start by thinking through rooms of the house beginning with your child's room.

- *"What do we need to do in your bedroom to keep it clean and ready to use?"*
- *"How should we deal with dirty clothes and prepare clean clothes for school?"*
- *"When and how do we prepare for and eat family dinner together?"*
- *"When we are finished playing, how do we leave our play areas?"*

Discuss challenges. In Step 2, plan to teach what they can do instead.

Write out a plan for chores.

Post your plan in a visible location and refer to it as a reminder.

**Tip** For 5-7-year-olds: Get out a paper and markers and have your child write down their ideas in response to the above questions. Consult the developmentally-appropriate list of chores (see full tool) to get ideas. For 8-10-year-olds: Create a checklist together of your household responsibility plan on a whiteboard or chalkboard.

**Trap** Be sure you create your plan at a calm time. Don't create your plan when you are either in the routine itself, are hungry or tired, or have time pressures.

## Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Say what you will model and why. Model it. *“Watch how I play waiter. You can try it after me!”*
- Ask your child what they noticed: *“What did you notice when I was acting like a waiter?”*
- Invite your child to model: *“Okay, your turn to pretend to be the waiter.”*
- Ask what they noticed with their own modeling: *“What did you notice when you did it?”*
- Practice together: *“Let’s both be waiters. I’ll set the napkins down and you place the silverware.”*
- Provide specific feedback starting with strengths using “I notice...” statements like, *“I noticed you handled the silverware carefully -- terrific! When you put the napkins down, be sure to count so that each person gets one.”*

**Tip** Be certain and pick a time to do this when you do not have time pressures.

**Tip** Remember: children learn through play. Play act like you would a game.

**Trap** Requiring a child to do a household task before teaching first is bound to create power struggles. Without teaching, your child may not feel like they can do the job competently. Take the time to teach the new job first before incorporating it into their routine!

## Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me...” statements like, *“Show me how you make your bed.”*
- Proactively remind: *“Remember our next step? What is it?”*

## Step 4. **Support** Your Child’s Development and Success

- Ask key questions: *“How are you feeling when it’s time to clean up? Do you know where everything goes?”*
- Recognize effort by using “I notice” statements like, *“I noticed how you went ahead and picked up your toys without me asking. That’s taking responsibility!”*
- Infuse some fun! Make clean-up time or chore time fun. Working together as a family can be enjoyable. Turn on some music or sing a song while working.
- Reflect on outcomes: *“Looks like you forgot to set the table. What could help you remember in the future?”*
- Stay engaged. Ask yourself if you need to reteach or make changes.
- Follow through with logical consequences to repair harm when needed.

**Trap** Check your own tone and attitude toward chores! If you groan when it’s time to get them done, your child will surely groan too. If you approach chores with a “Let’s dig in together!” kind of attitude, that’s how your child will learn to approach them as well.

**Trap** Don't move on or nag. Children often need more time to perform tasks that challenge them even if you believe they are simple and don't require much time. Be sure to wait long enough for your child to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they are able to do what you need them to do.

## Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes: *"I notice you put your game away when you were finished. Yes! Excellent."*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Include hugs in your repertoire of ways to appreciate one another.

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