



# CHORES & RESPONSIBILITIES

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by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

*Chores or household tasks also exercise children's organisational muscles, in particular their time management muscles. Make sure all kids have chores to do that are suitable for their age and stage of development.*

*Following is a list of responsibilities suitable for kids at different ages:*

## Early Childhood

### **3 years old**

1. Pick up toys after use
2. Stack magazines and papers in storage place
3. Undress and dress self with help
4. Wipe up spills
5. Clear table and put dishes on the bench
6. Carry clean clothes to cupboards
7. Put scraps in the rubbish bin

### **4 years old**

1. Set the table with help
2. Stack dishes in the dishwasher
3. Collect the mail
4. Make the bed
5. Prepare own cold cereal
6. Help with simple cooking
7. Tidy living areas

# Childhood

## 5 - 6 year old

1. Make own sandwich and clean up
2. Answer the phone
3. Feed pets and keep area clean
4. Pay for some purchases
5. Sort and tidy cutlery and kitchen utensils
6. Help with planning and grocery shopping
7. Set the table

## 7 - 8 years old

1. Prepare own school lunch
2. Take pet for a walk
3. Take care of own bike and outdoor toys
4. Fold and store clean laundry
5. Run errands for parents
6. Take phone messages and write them down
7. Iron simple pieces

## 9 - 10 years old

1. Operate the washing machine and dryer
2. Change own bed and put out laundry
3. Wash the car
4. Learn to bank and use money responsibly
5. Make tea and coffee
6. Help prepare shopping list
7. Cook simple meals from a recipe

## Adolescence

### **11 - 12 years old**

1. Travel on public transport
2. Plan own parties
3. Vacuum the house
4. Cook and prepare an evening meal for the family
5. Feed and bathe younger siblings
6. Put younger siblings to bed
7. Help in routine maintenance around the house

## Teenagers

1. Contribute to household responsibilities such as cooking, own room
2. Delegate an area of responsibility for them to look after e.g. feeding and walking a dog, weekly garbage, wood for a wood heating system
3. Cook a meal at least once a week
4. Make and organise own lunches
5. Organise own travel arrangements for hobbies, sports and outside interests
6. Organise own financial arrangements such as banking, investing and spending money
7. Take responsibility for clothing purchases within an agreed allowance or limit

## Sure-fire tips to getting kids to help

**Here are some ideas to keep in mind as you develop your family into a team of helpers:**

- 1. Give children realistic jobs rather than task that simply keep them busy.** Kids can sense it when parents give them jobs to keep them busy. Make sure the jobs you give make a real contribution to their own the family's well-being.
- 2. Balance the personal chores with family jobs.** Involve children in choosing their jobs. Rotate the unpleasant tasks frequently.
- 3. Place the more arduous or difficult tasks on a roster.** The children can refer to it when needed, which takes the load off you and removes the need to remind them.
- 4. Use grandma's principle\* to ensure their helping jobs are done.** That is, make sure jobs are completed before mealtimes and pleasant activities such as watching television.
- 5. Avoid doing jobs for children.** When children get the message that no one will do their jobs for them they will be more likely to help out.
- 6. Show your appreciation for their help.** Let them know that their contribution to the family is valued. If you do it often enough they may even show their appreciation for your help in return!
- 7. Make sure they do the whole job, not half a job.** Don't accept half-hearted efforts or half-completed jobs. If you think your child is capable of putting the cat food back in the fridge and placing the spoon in the dishwasher then insist that he or she does the whole job. That is what is valued in the world of work, which they will eventually enter.
- 8. Rebrand the term 'chore' as 'help'.** The term 'chore' definitely has an image problem. Mention the word and children turn up their nose in horror. Use the term 'help' as it is easier on the ear and really does indicate what you want from your kids.

**\*Grandma's principle** – putting activities in the right order. You get the bad things (making your bed) out of the way before you do the good things (watching TV or playing games).

### **Keep in mind:**

- 1.** Separate helping at home from pocket money. Expect them to help without being paid.
- 2.** Children can do a mixture of self-help activities and family jobs.
- 3.** Use rosters to place responsibility onto children to remember.

