

Winning the Chore War

“How many times do I have to remind you to take out the trash?” Sound familiar? Household jobs are a part of every family’s daily life, yet they tend to create ongoing conflict. Give yourself a pat on the back if you assign your kids chores. It’s an important way kids learn responsibility. Even children as young as two years old can help out around the house. Here are a few pointers for making the process easier on everybody.

Have a plan. Kids thrive on routine. It’s best if they have routine chores that they do at regular times. For instance, clearing the table is done right after eating. Trash is taken out immediately after the kitchen is cleaned up. Bed is made right after dressing. The more you develop these routines, the less reminding you will have to do. When you do have to remind your child it can be a brief statement, such as “Trash Time.” With more than one child you can rotate chores, but keep in mind it will take extra effort to develop new routines. Visual reminders help kids stay on track. A poster, chart, or job board can help kids stay focused.

Train and encourage. Use a four-step process when introducing a new job. First, you do the job, narrating as you work, while the child watches. Next, do the job together. Third, the child does the job while you watch, coach, and encourage. Fourth, the child is ready to go it alone. If you eliminate training then you open the door for battles since you will both be operating under different expectations.

Follow through. Once you decide on a plan, do your best to stick to it every day. If you allow excuses and delays then you’ll find yourself fighting with your child. If you have a kid who fights the routine, establish a consequence for failure to complete chores and follow through without anger or threats.

Who does what? Here’s a list of ideas to get you thinking about what your kids are capable of doing. Don’t underestimate your children! The same child who runs a complicated computer game can certainly manage the washer and dryer!

Ages 2-3
Put away toys
Help set table

Ages 4-5
Get the mail
Help with yard work
Feed pets

Ages 6-7
Clear table after meals
Pour own drinks and get snacks
Empty wastebaskets

Ages 8-9
Sweep or mop floor
Load and run dishwasher
Run/take own bath

Ages 10-11
Help prepare dinner
Mow lawn
Clean kitchen

Ages 12-14
Grocery shop (*small list*)
Prepare a dinner meal
Clean bathrooms

