

Jobs -- Age-Appropriate

Kids need to know they are important, contributing members of their family. It's never too early or too late to give your child jobs and responsibilities. Working on a chore provides opportunities to practice and acquire new skills, makes children feel useful, and teaches them appreciation for the work that has to be done and for those who do it. It's tempting to try to do it all yourself, thinking you can do it faster or better. However, each time you "do" for your children, you rob them of opportunities to grow and to learn cooperation and responsibility. Start with the basics and add jobs as your child acquires new skills and capabilities.

The following suggestions will help get you on the right track:

1. Take time to show your children how to do the job right, work with them until they learn the job. When they are ready to go solo, let them know you are there if they need help. Step back and allow them to find their style or pace.
2. Comment on the contribution not the quality of the work. (Remember, an adult can do it better, faster, etc. That is not the point!)
3. Involve your kids in creating a list of jobs that need to be done to help the family.
4. Provide kid-sized tools and equipment when available, such as small brooms, mops, rakes, dustpans and small outdoor tools.

18 months - Two years old

- Pick up toys when done playing
- Put dirty clothes in basket
- Throw away trash, tissues, wrappers
- Begin wiping up own spills

Two - Three years old

- Choosing clothing and dressing themselves.
- Pick up toys and put in appropriate place.
- Fold small laundry items
- Put away own clean clothes
- Buss/clean-up their own place at the table & take dishes to counter
- Put away groceries in low shelves & drawers
- Tear lettuce, butter bread, grate cheese, mix or stir batter, etc. for family meals
- Sweep the floor-rake leaves
- Put books and magazines away
- Set the table with napkins, utensils, plates and cups
- Clean up floor area after eating
- Wipe up their own spills
- Unload utensils from dishwasher
- Pick up own room- begin making bed

Four years old

- Dressing self
- Set table -- even with good dishes
- Help with grocery list and shopping
- Pet feeding schedule
- Clean own room and make beds
- Help prepare meals
- Pour own drink, serve self

- Bussing/clearing food items from table
- Hold mixer to mix batter or whip potatoes
- Fold small laundry items -- put away
- Help do dishes/load dishwasher
- Put groceries away
- Help dust and vacuum
- Help make sandwiches for lunch
- Get the mail
- Measure ingredients for cooking (with supervision)
- Prepare cold cereal-butter toast

Five years old

- Sort laundry, whites in one pile--colors in another
- Help serve family plates at mealtime
- Make their own lunch or simple breakfast-- clean up afterwards
- Help wash windows and blinds
- Scrub sinks and bathtub
- Help clean out & wash the car
- Sort recycling containers
- Remove laundry from dryer, fold, etc.
- Help with yard work
- Make simple menus & recipes
- Bring in and stack firewood
- Brush cats or dogs
- Pay for small purchases
- Take out trash
- Bundle up newspapers

Six - Eight years old

- Rake leaves and pull weeds
- Make lunches (home & school) & clean up after
- Cook simple foods (eggs, hot dogs, soup, grilled cheese, mini-pizzas, quesadillas, etc.).
- Prepare simple desserts (no-bake desserts)
- Shake rugs
- Putting all own clothing away (including hanging clothes)
- Water flowers and plants
- Bathe pets & take for walks
- Operate microwave & dishwasher
- Wash family car (inside & out)
- Answer phone and get person to phone
- Clean floors
- Help organize drawers & closets

Nine - Ten years old

- Operate washer and dryer
- Prepare family meals
- Help with menu planning
- Organize closets and garage
- Keep track of own appointments (school, gym, dance, music, etc.)
- Help plan family entertainment

- Answer phone & take accurate messages
- Be home for short durations
- Change bedding, wash dirty
- Prepare cookie & cake mixes
- Buy groceries using a list
- Do neighborhood jobs
- Perform basic first-aid
- Plan own birthday party
- Act as "host" -- wait on guest
- Help with home improvement projects
- Handle small sums of money

Eleven - Twelve years old

- Be home alone...
- Keep track of and get to own appointments (doctor, dentist, extra-curricular activities) within biking distance
- Take city bus
- A paper route
- Choose and be responsible for a hobby
- Helps parents paint or repair things
- Earn their own money (babysitting, pet sitting, & other neighborhood jobs)
- Mow & edge lawn
- Run own errands and help with family errands
- Clean pool or spa & outdoor area
- Check oil & water in car and refill

Suggestions

1. It may help to assign a time for weekly chores, where the whole family works on their jobs at the same time (many hands make for quick work!).
2. Don't "nag" your children to do their chores, let them know they can go on to the next activity after they have finished. Simply state "when you have finished bussing your spot..., cleaning your room..., sweeping the porch... etc., you may play with your toys, eat lunch, etc.".
3. Do not feel sorry for your child if they don't want to do their job, and do it for them, (they will learn quickly to push this button if you allow it). Simply state "We all have jobs to keep our house and family running, it's up to you how long it takes you to do yours".

From the book "**Practical Parenting**" by Alix Hall