

News Column
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Children and Household Chores

Should children be responsible for household chores? Some may argue that they are just kids and they should be allowed to play. Roger W. McIntire, University of Maryland [psychology](#) professor and author of *Raising Good Kids in Tough Times*, says, "A child has to have some responsibilities."

I believe that chores help kids learn responsibility and a careful plan can make it seem like it is a game and not a "chore". I grew up as the oldest girl in a family of ten kids and it was my job to make sure the house was clean, especially if company was coming. The game we played was Report Back and I am positive if you asked any one of my younger brothers and sisters, they will remember this game. We just started in one corner of the living room and I would say, "Lynette, take this to the bathroom and put it on the second shelf of the big closet and report back". I learned early on that if I did not say "report back" they sometimes did not report back!

Sometimes it may seem easier to just do the chores during the children's nap time or after everyone goes to bed. Most parents believe that having children complete household chores is a good way to teach responsibility. If you want your child to help around the house it is best to start when they are young. And remind everyone that if everyone helps with the chores then there will be time for the family to do something fun together.

I would suggest that you involve your spouse or other adult in the house and make sure you have a plan and a united front. Choose a time for all family members to meet and then start the discussion in a pleasant manner. You may want to start with a short list of things that need to be done such as setting the table and folding a load of laundry. But be sure to ask other family members what they think should be added to the list. Some jobs need to be done every day but others only need to be done monthly. Chores can be rotated each week or maybe there is a job jar and when it is time for chores to be completed, each person will draw out of the jar.

When I played the Report Back game with my brothers and sisters, I found I had to be very specific about where to put things or what I expected the finished job to look like. Job cards can be created that tell how to complete the cleaning job. The card will explain what cleaning products can be used and where they can be found. When checking up on the cleaning job, make suggestions kindly and offer praise. It will get easier after the first couple of months.

It will take time to teach others how to do all the household tasks but the time spent will pay off. When your oldest child leaves for college or goes out on their own, you will be so impressed that they know how to do their laundry and they can cook their own dinner.

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