



Put Your Children to Work

Doing a good job gives adults a sense of competency and independence. The same holds true for children. Youngsters who learn to clean up their spills at an early age are also learning to take pride in their achievements. As you teach your children to take care of themselves, remind them of how their efforts contribute to the welfare of the entire family.

Train Your Children

Remember that as you put your kids to work, you're teaching them responsibility, independence and competency. When you're ready to teach children new jobs, follow these steps:

- Be sure your child is able to succeed at the job you assign. Younger children need jobs with simple, straightforward steps. Older children can tackle more complex assignments.
- Explain the steps involved in the task and why it has to be done.
- Divide the job into manageable parts your child can understand and is capable of completing.
- Describe each component of the job in detail.
- Demonstrate the task yourself. Be sure to repeat the more difficult aspects of the job.
- If your child is confused about the task, have him or her write down the instructions. Your child may want to add his or her own illustrations to the instructions.
- Be patient with a child who is forgetful or lazy. If your child tries hard, but doesn't do the work exactly right, let it go until next time. You don't want your child to think that the instructions never end.
- Supervise your child at first. Always emphasize what he or she accomplished correctly. Then offer gentle, helpful hints on what could be done better.

Assign Chores

As youngsters grow older, you can assign them specific household chores and errands. Be sure to choose tasks that are appropriate for the age level and abilities of your child. Ask your children to:

- keep food and drinks in appropriate areas of the house.
- put dirty clothes in a hamper.
- help load the dishwasher.
- rake leaves.
- walk the dog.
- take out the garbage.
- help prepare the evening meal.
- put toys in the toy box.
- return books to shelves.
- fold laundry.
- help prepare and pack lunches.
- help with dusting.
- vacuum.
- mow the lawn.
- clean the tub.
- fetch items in the grocery store.

Work Together

Although it may not seem like the most exciting way to spend time together, sharing household tasks can be enjoyable if everyone approaches their jobs with a sense of fun and teamwork.

- Create an allowance system with a written agreement outlining each child's responsibilities.
- Use a family bulletin board or calendar to keep track of whose turn it is to do specific chores.
- Make up games to decide who will do each chore.
- Pick tasks out of a hat or ask children to pick a color or number that refers to a specific chore.
- Rotate jobs and have some easy ones, so family members don't dread doing recurring chores.