



Developing a Responsible Child

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Being responsible is something that develops over time and with lots of 'parental intervention'. Here's what you can expect from a child at different ages and tips to help you on your way:

Start early. If your 4 year old wants to help when he sees you doing the dishes, let him help - even if it means that you will need to do it again afterwards.

It may seem like a nuisance now, but by the time he's 7 or 8 years old, and is able to wash the dishes properly, he may no longer be interested!

It's natural for older children to be less excited about doing chores as these naturally interrupt free time and other "more interesting" activities. If you're putting it off until then, you may be waiting too long.

Invite your child to do chores with you. Spending time with a parent is a reward in itself and it's truly the best way to instill a positive attitude towards chores in general. Remember to create the best possible learning experience by giving a step-by-step running commentary throughout the process.

It is important to choose age-appropriate chores for your child. Here is a list that was taken from an article by Judith M. Creighton, Ph.D:

18-24 months

- Putting his dirty laundry in the wash basket (hamper is more American)
- Bringing his shoes to be put on
- Taking off his shoes, socks and all other clothing items, except ones that go over his head

2-3 years

- Washing and drying his hands
- Brushing his teeth with some assistance
- Packing away his pajamas in a special place
- Helping to set the table by putting knives, forks and spoons on the table (You'll need to do most of the work!)
- Clearing his own (unbreakable) plate, cutlery and empty cup
- Putting his toys away. Make it a rule that no new toy may be taken out of the toy box until the last one has been put away. One exception might be that a child may want to keep a project, which he is working on, out for longer.
- Arriving for meals on time. Use a timer that your child can see and give him a 5-10 minute head start. If he is on time, reward him with the first dish of pudding etc. If he is late, start without him.

4 Years

- Make his own bed
- Help to clear the dishes from the table
- Dusting
- Help tidy up his room
- Dressing himself (with supervision)
- Rinse the bath after he's bathed

5 Years

- Help with gardening
- Folding his clothes and putting them away
- Taking the garbage out
- Answering the phone

6 Years

- Feeding the pet
- Folding his own clean underwear
- Tying his own shoes
- Helping in the kitchen

Have a family meeting

After your child's 4th birthday, you can have family meetings during which every family member can suggest two things that need to be done around the house.

Ask who would be willing to perform the various tasks and discuss how much time each chore is going to take. Also make sure to agree on a standard that must be met with each chore.

This is a very practical way to teach managerial skills at an early age!

Model the desired behaviour

Make a chart and give your child the opportunity to personally update his chart by putting a star or a stamp on it when a chore is completed. This teaches your child self-accountability.

You can even make a chart for yourself and let your child see how you and the rest of the family members keep themselves accountable.

Remember to give positive feedback when you see your child has completed a chore. Also, at the end of the week, reward him if he has completed all his chores according to the agreed standard. And don't forget to have fun!