

Jobs at home

for school-aged children

"Work at home for children promotes the early maturity of children."

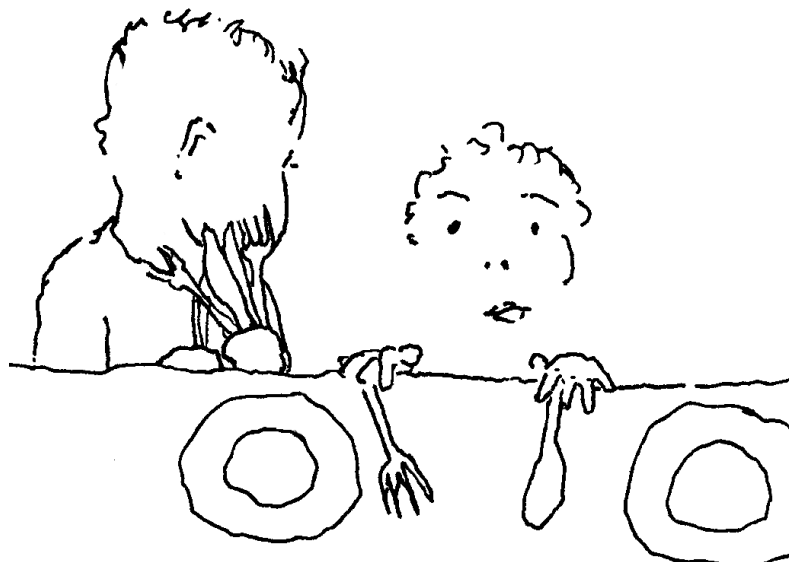
Raphael Pich, cofounder of International Federation For Family Development (IFFD)

By the time your child is in school, he'll be able to handle chores that are more substantial than what he did around the house as a preschooler. These chores help teach your child a number of worthwhile lessons: that helping others is as important as being helped, that life includes some unpleasant (or just mandatory) tasks, and that belonging to a group – whether it's the family, a workplace, or a community – involves making some contributions. Although your child's growing sense of responsibility and independence will allow him to tackle more of these jobs by himself, you shouldn't expect him to work independently all the time; he'll still need your help and supervision from time to time, which is a good thing – chores that are done along with a parent can foster the special type of closeness that comes from working side by side.

Ready for more responsibility

School-age children should be capable of taking care of their own belongings, putting dirty clothes in the laundry basket, and picking up toys every night. Depending on their age, physical strength, and maturity, they also can be given more demanding tasks, including:

- taking over more pet-care duties, such as walking the dog, emptying the kitty's litter box, changing the lining of a bird's cage, brushing the dog or cat
- sorting the laundry, and then folding it after it's washed and dried
- helping to plan, prepare, and clean up after meals
- weeding, planting, and watering the garden
- setting the table, and then clearing it after meals
- washing the car
- dusting and vacuuming
- sweeping the front steps
- carrying in firewood
- making their beds
- reading to younger siblings.



It's forks on the left, knives on the right.

A schedule helps

School-age children are able to develop a general sense of what is expected of them when it comes to chores – that the table is set every night, for instance, while plants are watered every few days, and the car is washed every week or two. Still, most need a little nudging to spring into action and keep their duties straight.

You can cut down on your aggravation – and the need to nag – by making a chart of each family member's responsibilities, and post it in a well-used area, such as the kitchen. You can even make a monthly, calendar-type chart on the computer (or by hand) and have everyone initial each chore as they complete it. And remember that thanking your kids each time they remember their chores on their own can provide crucial encouragement do do it regularly.

Keep it fun

Your approach toward chores is key to helping your children accept them as a natural and rewarding part of life. If you and your partner complain about the drudgery of keeping house, your kids are sure to adopt that negative view, also, and become more resistant to doing their own jobs. And if you take a nagging or critical tone with them, they'll develop a bad attitude toward the whole subject.

Instead, whenever possible, try to give your children chores that they'll enjoy, and rotate both the good jobs and the ones that no-one especially likes. Besides occasionally working alongside your children, encourage siblings to do some chores together so they can enjoy each other's company and practise teamwork. Put on lively music, have contests to see who can finish their tasks first, or schedule a little treat at the end of chore day (like going out for ice-cream or watching a video together). You don't have to make everything fun all the time – that's simply not realistic – but by maintaining an upbeat and matter-of-fact attitude towards household chores, you can do a lot to keep your helpers whistling while they work.

Source: Susan E Davis updated by Dr Robert Needlman
www.raisingchildren.net.au

How great can you be!

"It's amazing how high some parents put the crossbar for their kids and how low they put it for themselves."

Jack Gibson

Raising children sometimes can seem like an operation with a high degree of uncertainty but we must never lose confidence that we can raise children successfully and that we can make them life-ready. We must not forget that an affectionately demanding upbringing is necessary to prepare children to handle inevitable challenges and setbacks.

In a society which likes to avoid suffering, it is important for parents not to seek to minimise their own parenting hassles. Parents who demand little of themselves can ask little of their children, and tragically, children who have little asked of them, but a lot given to them, will be totally underprepared in life. Too often today we see children who are bereft of the character development they need before the pressures that society, media, and peer group are constantly exerting.

Effective parents realise they do no favour to their children by making life as easy as possible. They know that they have a limited time to prepare their children. They know that while they have a duty not to expose their children to dangerous influences, they will have to rely less and less on a sheltering environment as their teenagers grow into adulthood. As their children grow older, they must be taught to solve their own problems and to face these problems with inner convictions, fortitude and ideals. Faith can help too. Time is short, and the stakes are high.

As a consequence they give of themselves and they expect a lot of their children. With affection they make the right demands on each one of their children. The bottom line is set at a very healthy height where membership in the family implies that every member puts others before himself, works hard at his responsibilities, learns to control his own temperament, contributes to family life, and practises generosity with his material possessions. And in all these areas the best parents lead by example.

"Treat a man as he is and he will remain what he is; treat him as he can and should be and he will become as he can and should be."

Goethe