

## Why Parents Should Bother with Chores, and How to Get your Kids to Do Them

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“I just can’t get him to put the dishes in the sink!” “She won’t even put her dirty clothes in the hamper, and the hamper is in her bedroom”. “Asking my kids to do chores always results in an argument, so I’ve just given up trying. I’ll just do it myself”.

As a parent, you may have made similar comments about your own kids. You may be so frustrated and “fed up” with trying to elicit compliance from your children that you have resigned to doing all of the chores yourself. As a professional who works with parents and children impacted by AD/HD I’ll start by saying, “Don’t give up!” Chores teach children necessary “life skills”, help them to become more responsible, improve time management skills and provide a sense of competence.

Here are a few guidelines for chores:

- 1) ***Start early.*** It’s never too early to teach your children to pick up their belongings, and help out around the house. As the Barney song goes, “Clean up, clean up, everybody, everywhere”.
- 2) ***Match the chore to your child’s developmental level.*** Toddlers, for example, love to sort and match objects. It’s a great time to encourage your young children to sort clothes for laundry or put silverware into the matching tray.
- 3) ***Be creative.*** Enlist help from your kids when making a chore chart and use their strengths. If one of your kids likes to draw, ask her to draw pictures to correspond to each chore. For the child who needs order, ask him to use his computer to create a graph of progress for each child. The point is to get all of your children involved so that they have some control over how the chores are divided.
- 4) ***Break down the task into smaller pieces*** – Children and adolescents with ADD may often overlook the details, instead of focusing on the bigger picture. To help your child focus on the details of cleaning, break a task such as Laundry, into smaller steps. Enlist your child’s help by asking him to take photos of each step (sorting, washing, drying, folding, putting away). Display the photos in the laundry room.
- 5) ***Use Rewards*** – Include space on the chore chart for stickers, stars, or checks indicating a completed task. Point systems work well for many families – children earn points for various chores, and then points are used toward some reward such as a toy, game, or more TV time. Be sure to think through the reward before it is offered to your children. Rewards should also match the child’s developmental level. For example, younger children typically need more immediate rewards, where older children are often able delay gratification by waiting for points to accumulate.

- 6) ***Don't Give up on Your Kids*** – Habits take time. Your child needs to “train his or her brain” to perform certain tasks, in a certain order. In time, the chore will be accomplished, maybe not as perfectly as you would like, but it will be good enough, and once one habit is formed, another one will follow.