Age Appropriate Chores
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction** ................................................................................................................................................................... 2

**Section One: More Than a Chore** .................................................................................................................................. 3

- A Closer Look at Chores ............................................................................................................................................. 3
- 21 Lessons Chores Teach ........................................................................................................................................... 4
- Motivating Your Kids to Pitch In – 10 Questions to Ask ............................................................................................ 7
- To Pay or Not to Pay? .............................................................................................................................................. 10
- All About Chore Charts ............................................................................................................................................ 11
- Implementing Chores .............................................................................................................................................. 12
- Do’s and Don’ts of Chores ....................................................................................................................................... 14
- Frequently Asked Questions ................................................................................................................................... 15

**Section Two: Age-Appropriate Chore List** .................................................................................................................... 17

- Chores for Ages 12-24 months ................................................................................................................................ 18
- Chores for Two Year Olds ........................................................................................................................................ 18
- Chores for Three Year Olds ..................................................................................................................................... 19
- Chores for Four Year Olds ....................................................................................................................................... 20
- Chores for Five and Six Year Olds ............................................................................................................................ 21
- Chores for Seven through Nine Year Olds ............................................................................................................... 21
- Chores for Ten through Twelve Year Olds ............................................................................................................... 22
- Chores for Thirteen through Fifteen Year Olds ....................................................................................................... 24
- Chores for Sixteen Year Olds and Up ...................................................................................................................... 25

**Wrap-Up** ...................................................................................................................................................................... 26

**About the Author** ......................................................................................................................................................... 27
MOM. Cole, pick up your toys.

COLE, whining. I want to play!

MOM. Help me pick up now!

(Cole keeps playing).

MOM. You made this mess, now help me! Clean up!

(Cole continues to ignore Mom and keeps on playing).

MOM, frustrated. Fine, don’t help me, but all your toys are going in the trash.

(Cole cries hysterically).

Is this how cleanup time goes in your home? If so, read on! I’m here to help you turn that scenario around!

Have you ever seen a toddler cleanup his toys? It’s a truly amazing thing. If you want to raise a child who is responsible and organized, it can be done! How? By teaching your child from the get-go that picking up after ourselves is just what we do.

But if you have older kids is it too late? Of course not! You can put your nagging to an end by implementing a consistent system that will motivate your child to pitch in and pickup around the home.

Children thrive and are more productive in an environment that is uncluttered, structured and organized. They’re able to focus on the task at hand and aren’t distracted by their environment. But more than that, chores teach kids basic life skills. From responsibility to
organization, from ownership to the importance of teamwork, chores play an essential role in helping you to raise great kids!

SECTION ONE: MORE THAN A CHORE

A CLOSER LOOK ATchores

While on the surface, chores may appear to teach kids to be clean and tidy, they do so much more. Every child has an innate desire to feel part of something bigger than themselves and allowing a child to take part in keeping the home running smoothly allows them to fulfill that desire.

If you’ve ever been approached by your child proudly announcing he just helped clear the table, while you were in the bathroom, you know what I mean. While you were in the other room he took it upon himself to throw all the plates (and the food on them) into the sink. While you didn’t know whether to laugh or cry, you praised him for making such a valiant effort to help out.

You see kids want to have a place to belong. They want to contribute and want to know that what they have to offer matters. Capitalizing on this desire to fit in and to feel included is the secret to getting your child to be a good household helper. It’s when parents don’t allow their kids to contribute to the running of the home and family (and appreciate and accept their contributions and efforts) they find that their kids develop a sense of entitlement that leads to frustration for both parents and children alike.
21 LESSONS CHORES TEACH

In addition to helping a child feel connected to their family unit and giving them an age-appropriate responsibility in its operational success, chores teach children basic life skills.

Chores teach kids:

**Ownership.** Chores teach children that it’s your job to be responsible for the things that you own. Parents may give children ownership of clothes, toys, place settings and even trash!

**Responsibility.** Chores teach children that you have an active role in determining how your things are cared for. Parents may give kids responsibility for their rooms, their play areas or their toys.

**Time management.** Chores teach children that you need to leave adequate time to accomplish tasks. Parents may require children to pick up their toys before practice or going to a friend’s house.

**Natural consequences.** Chores teach children that sometimes when you don’t do something, it just doesn’t get done. Natural consequences could include having no clean “cool clothes”, having a favorite pair of jeans dirty when wanted for wear, or having a toy broken from being accidently stepped on or eaten by the dog.

**Organization.** Chores teach children that everything has a place. Toys go in the toy room and books go on the bookshelf, for example.
**Structure.** Chores teach children that certain things have to be done in certain ways. Dishes need to be scraped before they go into the sink or that making the bed is part of the daily routine.

**Independence.** Chores teach children that they can accomplish some tasks on their own. Assigning age-appropriate chores can foster independence.

**The value of teamwork.** Chores teach children that sometimes it takes the effort of all to accomplish a task. Everyone needs to pitch in to tidy the house or clear the table before going out or moving on to the next thing.

**Value.** Chores teach children that things and contributions have value. Assigning chores helps kids to see that that their contributions in keeping the home neat are part of a shared family success.

**Self-reliance.** Chores teach kids that sometimes they can count on themselves. As kids grow older their tasks grow larger and kids can learn to do many household things for themselves.

**How to be self sufficient.** Chores teach kids that they can care for their own basic needs. Allowing kids to be responsible for preparing snacks or cleaning their room teaches them that they can take care of themselves.

**Confidence.** Chores teach kids to have a “can do” attitude. When a child completes age-appropriate tasks they grow confidence in their abilities and skill set.
The power of participation. Chores teach kids that the action of one can make a difference. When a child sees that what they did counts and can share in a joint success they’ll learn to become active participators.

About community. Chores teach kids the value of community. The family home is the first community that kids take part in. Teaching kids the importance of playing an active role in their family will set them up to play active roles in their schools, neighborhoods and world!

Prioritization. Chores teach kids that things in life have priorities. Assigning chores teaches kids that some things come before others and that we have to clean one thing up before we go onto the next.

Expectations. Chores teach children to meet expectations from those in authority. Asking that chores be completed properly and on time will help set a child up for success in his work life.

Respect. Chores teach children to treat things properly. Putting trash in the basket instead of on the ground, for example, shows respect for our environment.

Discipline. Chores teach kids that we sometimes have to force ourselves to do what’s right. While your child may want to run off and play it takes self-discipline to tidy up before moving on.
That hard work pays off. Chores teach kids that time, energy and effort yield lasting results. Being able to find what you’re looking for without digging through a mess is a great feeling!

How to complete basic household tasks. Chores teach children how to run a home. As kids get older they can learn to clean, cook and even sew!

Money management. Chores teach kids the value of a dollar. While kids shouldn’t be paid for doing the essentials, paying for chores that go above and beyond, like cleaning dad’s car, may deserve payment. Kids can then learn how to manage the money they’ve earned.

MOTIVATING YOUR KIDS TO PITCH IN – 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK

All children have different temperaments, personalities and personal styles and these influence what motivates a child to complete their chores. While some children may be motivated by the “feel good feeling” that comes along with helping out, others may need to receive tons of praise for a job well done.

To best motivate your child to pitch in you’ll need to discover what works best for his temperament, personality and personal style.

Ask yourself these 10 questions to help you learn how to best motivate your child:

Q1: Is your child easily distracted?
Some kids are more persistent than others and will continue on with a chore until it is completed, while other kids can become easily distracted. A child who is easily distracted may be motivated best when chores are approached as a team activity where everyone does their chores together.

Q2: Does your child have trouble getting started?

Kids who have trouble getting started in doing their chores may have issues getting organized. Help your child to get organized by walking through the chore step-by-step.

Q3: Is your child a visual learner?

Kids who are visual learners do best if they have a check list or chore chart to help them see what needs to be done and are able to cross tasks off the list once they are completed. For younger children, pictures can substitute words.

Q4: Is your child a physical learner?

Kids who are physical learners do best when being shown how to do a chore before doing it on their own. Modeling the proper way to do a chore can help these children succeed.

Q5: Is your child an auditory learner?

Children who are auditory learners do best when being walked through, step-by-step, how to do a chore. They may work well doing their chores to a special cleanup song or rhyme you make up together.

Q6: Does your child do best with structure?
Children who thrive on structure do best when chores are part of their daily routine. Using a chore chart to help a child map out their daily routine can be the key to success.

Q7: Is your child creative?

Creative children can be motivated to do chores by helping to suggest which chores they would enjoy and by implementing their unique approach to doing them. This child may also be motivated by creating their own aprons or making their chore charts.

Q8: Is your child a procrastinator?

Children sometimes use procrastination as a tool to deal with feeling overwhelmed. Reevaluate the chores you’ve asked him to do and be sure they are age and time appropriate. Encouraging a procrastinator and offering gentle guidance can help the child to success with his chores.

Q9: Is your child an independent spirit?

Giving a child who thrives for their independence a clear set of weekly responsibilities can help foster success. Rewarding this child with increased levels of independence can be a huge motivator.

Q10: Does your child do best with negative or positive reinforcement?

A child who does best with negative reinforcement may be motivated if he knows he will lose a privilege or reward if a chore is not completed while a child who works best with
positive reinforcement may be motivated by receiving positive praise or a small reward. Use a chore chart as an easy reliable way to track rewards and privileges.

**TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY?**

For parents, it is important to strike a balance between teaching a child to appreciate intrinsic rewards and extrinsic rewards. While you want your child to learn to recognize the internal feelings of gratification and sense of self-worth, chores can provide the perfect opportunity to teach your child money management and the financial rewards that come with hard work.

And in a world where plastic has become a primary form used when making financial transactions, if your child doesn’t learn that hard work yields a pay check, how will he ever learn that money doesn’t grow on trees?

Consider paying your children for chores that go beyond those essentials that contribute to basic household operation. While basic chores may include chores involving picking up after oneself, laundry and helping to set the table, chores that go above and beyond may include cleaning out the refrigerator, organizing a common closet, or childcare. For basic chores “a job well done” is the best compensation.

Once you decide what chores will earn your child cash, it’s important to teach your child how to handle their money. I suggest having children break their earnings up by using the
4-S System:

**Spend Now** – for items they wish to purchase with their own earnings

**Spend Later** – for items they need to save up to buy, like a new bike, for example

**Save** – for college, vacation or a car

**Send** – for church or charity

ALL ABOUT CHORE CHARTS

Chore charts are a great way to organize, track and measure chores. They not only motivate children to get their chores done, but provide busy parents, care-givers, and teachers an easy and efficient method for verifying that assigned chores are completed.

Research shows that tracking and measuring can help you reach your goal and accomplish what you set out to do. Need a real life example? Think about Weight Watchers. One of the reasons this weight management program is so successful is because members must track and measure their progress.

But for your chore chart to be effective, you’ll need to take into consideration your child’s personal style. For some kids, a simple list of chores with a place to put check marks when completed will work well, while others may need a more appealing chart full of colorful borders and a place to put stickers of their choice.
But whatever chore charting system you decide on, keep in mind the “CPR Principle” that lends success to any charting system.

For an award chart system to work, you must:

- **Be Consistent**
- **Be Positive**
- **Be Realistic**

**IMPLEMENTING CHORES**

If your children are still young, you have a little bit of an edge when it comes to getting them to take part in doing chores. If younger children grow up in a home where chores are just something they do and they are approached as a normal part of home life, getting your kids to take part is hardly ever a problem.

But if your kids are older and accustomed to having others do things for them, starting any new system can be challenging. Once you decide that you’re going to make assigned chores part of your family’s operational system, it’s important to get the kids involved.

Gather together and ask your children what they think it takes to keep the home running? Have a list ready of all the things you do. Make a list of all your children’s suggestions and then supplement with your own pre-prepared list. It will amaze them all the items that need to be done to keep your home running smoothly.
Next, decide who is going to be responsible for doing what chores. It’s always a good idea to first allow kids to volunteer to do certain chores before assigning them. Approaching chores from the “family team” perspective where everyone needs to pitch in to succeed usually works well. Keep a list of who volunteers for what and compile a chore chart based on these volunteer assignments. Be sure to let the kids know that while choosing chores was based on a volunteer method, completing them is not.

And when it comes to chores, it’s also a good idea to talk to the kids about what they feel that the rewards and consequences of completing (or failure to complete) their chores should be. Write them out and post them near the chore chart for everyone to see. In many families, the refrigerator serves as a great place to hang the chore chart and list of rewards and consequences.

If your children lack a spirit of volunteerism in the chore department, don’t worry. Start off by assigning some basic chores that they are already doing or starting to do (like picking up their dirty clothes). As they see how your system works and receive their rewards in a timely manner, they’ll be less likely to balk when you add or change chores.

You’ll also have to do your part and regularly inspect and track the progress of the chores. Older children can check off chores when they are complete and ready for your inspection. Let younger kids show off their work and you can check them off together.

Regardless of what system you use, being clear about your expectations, consistently requiring that chores be completed and quickly doling out praise, rewards and even consequences for not doing chores on time will be your keys to success.
DO’S AND DON’TS OF CHORES

When it comes to chores, there are a few do’s and don’ts you’ll need to know to help your child succeed.

Do:

- Clearly assign chores
- Chose age-appropriate chores
- Be consistent about enforcing chore completion
- Track and measure chore progress
- Be fair about the work assigned
- Explain why different kids in the family have different chores. Share that younger children may have fewer chores because they can do less and that teenagers may have fewer chores because they have a job, for example
- Be clear about your expectations and to what standard the chore must be done
- Inspect the work and make sure that it meets the standard you’ve outlined
- Promptly issue a reward, whether it is praise, a sticker or points which may even be used for other rewards
- Be clear and upfront about the penalty for failure to do the chore
- Reevaluate the chore load and tasks every three months
• Increase chore responsibilities as children get older

Don’t

• Expect your children to do all the chores around the house. Everyone, including Mom and Dad should pitch in

• Have unreasonable expectations

• Let chores go undone

• Nag. Instead just follow through with the pre-determined consequences

• Do the chores for the children (unless they want to pay you!)

• Withhold praise, payment or rewards for a job well done

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. At what age should chores start?

Children as young as one can begin to pitch in! Have your baby or toddler start bringing you a toy or book during cleanup time. Little ones can help sing a cleanup song or put toys into a bin.

2. How do I get my kids to do their chores without nagging?

Be consistent with enforcing that chores be done and have set consequences in place for when chores are not completed.
3. How should I assign chores?

There are several ways you can assign age-appropriate chores. These include by rotating chores among children of similar age within the home, by giving a child ownership over specific chores or by having a child own certain chores (like putting clothes in the hamper) and rotating others, like clearing the table.

4. Is it okay to have my son do “girl chores” or my daughter do “boy chores?”

Is there really such a thing? Give your child a taste of all the skills and tasks needed to successfully operate your home.

5. What is a chore?

A chore is something that keeps the household running smoothly and in a clean and efficient manner.
In this section, ideas for chores are listed according to the age a child may first be able to successfully complete the chore. For young children, they may need assistance completing the chore and the job may be less than perfect, but the important thing is to begin making chores a part of your household routine for all.

For example, an 18-month old with a toddler bed is able to pull up their sheets and blanket and place their pillow on top. Yes, the bed will be rumply, and yes, they will need you on the other side pulling up the sheets along with them. But the point is, this gets your child used to doing a chore (and who cares if the bed has some rumples!). When you are done making the bed with your child, a positive comment such as “Wow, look how nice it is to have your bed made!” gives your child a positive feeling and helps foster a sense of accomplishment. And remember, as your child grows, they will be able to make their bed without assistance, and without all the rumples.

It is vital that you assign chores that are age appropriate and that your expectations are geared towards your child’s age and abilities. Assigning chores that are too advanced for a child or expecting a perfectly neat and tidy job from a small child will only lead to frustration for both you and your child. As your child grows, increase their level of responsibility around the home by building on the chores that they can already complete successfully.
CHORES FOR AGES 12-24 MONTHS

Help wipe down table
Help collect toys for clean up
Help throw trash away
Help make beds
Help with groceries
Help water plants or the garden
Put clothes in laundry basket

CHORES FOR TWO YEAR OLDS

All the above chores, plus . . .

Carry in small items from car
Clean up spills
Pick up dropped items
Dust with socks on hands
Fill pet food dish with supervision
Hang clothes on hooks
Make bed
Mop a small area
Pick up toys
Put books on a shelf
Put clothes in hamper
Help sort laundry

**CHORES FOR THREE YEAR OLDS**

*All the above chores, plus . . .*

Bring in the mail from the front door slot

Carry small items from grocery sacks to the pantry

Empty paper trash cans

Help set the table

Help wash the car

Help measure and stir in the kitchen

Make thank you cards

Tidy up their room

Put away forks and spoons from dishwasher

Put dirty clothes in hamper

Put shoes away

Sort and fold socks

Undress and dress with some help
Wash hands and face

**CHORES FOR FOUR YEAR OLDS**

*All the above chores, plus . . .*

Brush own hair

Clear table after meals

Dust furniture

Feed family pets at scheduled times

Fold laundry and help put away

Make a bowl of cereal

Rinse dishes

Help with grocery list

Help with grocery shopping

Make bed independently

Set table independently

Sort laundry with supervision

Take laundry basket to laundry room
Help vacuum and sweep

**CHORES FOR FIVE AND SIX YEAR OLDS**

*All the above chores, plus . . .*

Choose clothes and get dressed and undressed independently

Take care of school backpack

Set table independently

Help rake or sweep outside

Help with more difficult meal preparations like making juice or using a blunt knife

Help care for with younger siblings with bottle feeding

Practice tying shoes

Make a simple sandwich

Pour a drink

Take out the trash

Water the garden and lawn

**CHORES FOR SEVEN THROUGH NINE YEAR OLDS**
All the above chores, plus . . .

Carry in the grocery bags from the car

Clean bathroom tub, sink and countertops

Hang and fold laundry

Put all clothing away

Help prepare breakfast and lunch

Help shovel snow

Do laundry with supervision

Mop

Wash cat or dog

CHORES FOR TEN THROUGH TWELVE YEAR OLDS

All the above chores, plus . . .

All self care

Answer telephone and take messages

Carry own lunch money to school

Do homework independently
Change sheets

Clean up pet accidents

Complete care of bedroom

Household organizing projects

Scrub floor

Wash windows

Do simple ironing

Empty trash

Feed a baby

Fold blankets

Gather wood

Get own snacks

Handle small sums of money independently

Learn to use basic tools

Make more complex hot meals/snacks

Painting projects with supervision

Make school lunch
Put away groceries

Receive and answer own mail

Run own shower water

Sew buttons and simple tears

Take care of younger siblings with parent in house

Walk pets with supervision

Wash and dry dishes or load/unload dishwasher

Write thank-you notes

Replace light bulbs

**CHORES FOR THIRTEEN THROUGH FIFTEEN YEAR OLDS**

*All the above chores, plus . . .*

Babysit for a short period of time

Mow lawn independently

Help do small household repairs

Walk dog independently

Clean kitchen appliances
CHORES FOR SIXTEEN YEAR OLDS AND UP

All the above chores, plus . . .

Babysit for an evening

Do errands as asked

Help with basic car maintenance with supervision

Edge lawn

Deliver meals to those in need

Split wood

Clean out fireplace

Clean gutters

Help bathe younger children

Trim trees and bushes

Till lawn

Shop at the grocery store

Prepare a simple family meal
Questions? Comments? We’d love to hear from you about how you handle chores in your family. What chores do your kids do? How do you motivate your kids? What special issues do you face in raising your children? Send an email to Chores@raiseastar.com or join us at The Parenting Conundrum, (www.TheParentingConundrum.com) a place where parents get together and discuss everyday parenting issues and find common sense solutions.
MICHELLE LaROWE is the 2004 International Nanny Association Nanny of the Year and is the author of the *Nanny to the Rescue!* parenting series, *Working Mom’s 411* and *A Mom’s Ultimate Book of Lists*. She holds a bachelor’s degree in chemistry and a certificate in pastoral studies and has spent more than a decade as a professional nanny and parenting consultant. Michelle is an active member of the nanny community and has served on the board of directors and as vice president of the International Nanny Association. She and her husband, Jeff, live on Cape Cod with their daughter, Abigail. Learn more about Michelle at [www.michellelarowe.com](http://www.michellelarowe.com).

This booklet was produced in partnership with the *Raise A Star Parenting System*, a new breakthrough parenting system designed to help parents raise successful children - *One Star at a Time*. Visit us at [www.RaiseAStar.com](http://www.RaiseAStar.com) to learn more.