

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - No. 1 parenting educator



Make sure they help at home..... without being paid



It's best to expect children and young people to help without being paid. By all means provide them with pocket money, but avoid linking it to chores. Helping out in exchange for money develops in children a notion of 'What's in it for me?', which is a self-centred view of life.

Confident kids are competent kids. Past experience has taught them that they can be successful. One way to help develop a sense of competency is to give kids opportunities to help out at home. There is no need to overburden children with jobs, but a sensible allocation of chores according to their age, study requirements and interests is not only a great help to you, but good training for them. They develop the skills of independent living when they help at home, and the notion that they are capable.

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Many parents have difficulty getting their children to help. Some spend so much time nagging children to do jobs that they often give up asking and expect little of them. Here are some ideas to encourage your children to help out at home:

1. **Keep it real:** Kids can sense when parents give them jobs to keep them busy. Make sure the jobs you apportion make a real contribution to your family's well-being.
2. **Balance the personal chores with family jobs.** Chores are generally divided into two areas. Jobs such as keeping a bedroom tidy benefits a child and jobs such as setting the table benefit the family. By doing this kids learn to contribute positively to family-life.
3. **Place the more arduous or difficult tasks on a roster.** Children can refer to it when needed, which takes the load off you and removes the need to remind them. Rotate the unpleasant tasks frequently.
4. **Use Grandma's principle to make sure jobs are done.** Grandma's principle means you do the less pleasant tasks first. That is, make sure jobs are finished before mealtimes or before starting pleasant activities such as watching television.

5. **Avoid doing jobs for children.** When children get the message that no one will do their jobs for them they will be more likely to help out.
6. **Show your appreciation for their help.** Make a fuss when they help so they know that their contribution to the family is valued. If you do it often enough they may even show their appreciation for all you do for them!
7. **Keep your standards high.** Don't accept half-hearted efforts or half-completed jobs. If you think your child is capable of putting the cat food back in the fridge and placing the spoon in the dishwasher then insist that he or she does just that, rather than leaving the cat food on the sink. A job properly done is valued in the world of work, which they will eventually enter.
8. **Rebrand the term 'chore' as 'help':** The term 'chore' definitely has an image problem. Use the term 'help' as it is easier on the ear and really does indicate what you want from your kids.

Here's a challenge: Step back and assess if your children are doing enough around the house to help. Get my free **Chores & Responsibilities Guide** from my website and use this to help you work out the helping tasks that they could and should be doing. Go to www.parentingideas.com.au/parents and get your FREE **Chores & Responsibilities Guide**.

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