



The Award Winning Column That Helps Adults Understand Kids

Kids Talk Job List

Home Responsibilities

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In today's changing society, children are challenged to become "working partners" with parents and teachers. Challenges such as this one can be met in many ways: mutual respect, sharing of opinions, acceptance of decisions, cooperative setting of goals, standards, or limitations, and permitting certain rights and privileges.

Assuming responsibilities can enhance the individual interpersonally and intrapersonally. As the child learns the benefits of order resulting from cooperation, he begins to view himself as a person who is capable of making a contribution to others. Growth in this area is best acquired developmentally, whereby the child becomes useful and needed at an early age, with the expectation of becoming more self-reliant and independent as time passes.

The adult's personal experiences and situation may lead him to find many ways in which a child can contribute. Sometimes parents and teachers, aware of the need for giving children responsibility, are stymied at knowing what to do and what to expect. The following is intended to meet this need.

This list, prepared by teachers and parents, is CUMULATIVE. As the child advances in age or grade he can continue to maintain past responsibilities as well as assuming new ones. The list, meant to suggest possibilities, is only a starting point subject to the situation and creativity of the adults. Children may be able to accomplish tasks at ages above or below those suggested.

In training for these responsibilities, it may be wiser to proceed gradually. First establish a relationship, and then through friendly discussions, the adult and the child together may determine the manner in which the child can become a contributing member.

Before assigning duties, it would be helpful to keep some of the following principles in mind:

1. Children have rights as well as responsibilities. If these rights are arbitrarily or impulsively withdrawn by the adult, the child may feel dominated or revengeful and will resist any efforts to elicit his cooperation.
2. Children should be consulted about the jobs that need to be done. After they have helped identify the work, then they must help set the standards for work, and be involved in the evaluation of the completed job.
3. Allow the children choices in which jobs they would like to do. (Not doing anything is not one of the choices). They must then follow through with their choice or experience the consequences.
4. Allow the consequences to follow logically from the uncompleted job. Do not discuss beforehand what will happen if someone does not fulfill the commitment.
5. Place appropriate time limits on when a task should be completed. If the child participated in setting these time limits, he will be more willing to meet them.
6. Vary the tasks to do. Children become easily bored with the same thing. They like the challenge of a new or unusual job.
7. Use common sense in the number of tasks expected of each child. He may stage a "sit-down" strike if he feels used.
8. Remember you are a model of "order" to your children. Do not expect an orderliness or cleanliness from them that you do not expect of yourself.
9. Examine your own standards. Perhaps you are a perfectionist about your house or classroom, feel uncomfortable if things are slightly out of order, or are concerned about what others will think. Learn to accept the house or classroom as a place of work and communication for the members, and not as a reflection of your own personal worth.
10. Never do anything for a child that he can do for himself.

Tasks for two-year-olds

- Pick up toys and return to proper place
- Put books and magazines in a rack
- Sweep the floor
- Place napkins and silverware on table.
- Clean up what they drop when eating.
- Give a choice of two foods for breakfast.
- Clear own place at the table.
- Toilet training.
- Brush teeth, wash hands and brush hair.
- Undress self.

- Wipe up own spills.
- Put food away from grocery sacks to shelves.

Tasks for three and four-year-olds.

- Setting the table, even with good dishes.
- Put the groceries away.
- Help with grocery shopping and grocery list.
- Polish shoes and clean up afterwards.
- Follow a schedule for feeding pets.
- Help do yard and garden work.
- Make the beds and vacuum.
- Help do the dishes and fill the dishwasher.
- Dust the furniture.
- Have goal chart with tasks.
- Spread butter on sandwiches.
- Prepare cold cereal.
- Help prepare plates of food for family dinner.
- Make a simple dessert (jello, ice cream, yoghurt)
- Hold the hand mixer to whip potatoes or mix batter.
- Get the mail.
- Should be able to play without constant adult supervision.
- Fold laundry.
- Polish silver, brass and car.
- Sharpen pencils.

Tasks for five-year-olds

- Help with meal planning and grocery shopping.
- Make own sandwich and simple breakfast. Clean up.
- Pour own drink.
- Prepare dinner table.
- Tear up lettuce for salad.
- Measure and pour ingredients for a recipe.
- Make bed and clean room.
- Dress and choose outfit.
- Scrub sink, toilet and bathtub.
- Clean mirrors and windows.
- Separate clothing for laundry.
- Answer and dial phone properly.
- Yard work.
- Pay for small purchases.
- Help clean out the car.
- Take out the garbage.
- Help make family entertainment decisions.
- Learn to tie shoes.
- Feed pets and clean the living area.

Tasks for six-year-olds.

- Choose clothing according to weather.
- Shake rugs.
- Water plants and flowers.
- Peel vegetables.
- Cook simple food (toast, hot dog, boiled eggs)
- Prepare own lunch for school.
- Hang up own clothes in closet.
- Gather wood for fireplace.
- Rake leaves and weeds.
- Take pet for a walk.
- Tie own shoes.
- Responsible for minor injuries.
- Keeping garbage container clean.
- Clean inside of car.
- Straighten and clean silverware drawer.

Tasks for seven-years-olds

- Oil and care for bike and lock it when unused.
- Take phone messages and write them down.
- Run errands for parents.
- Sweep and wash patio area.
- Water the lawn.
- Proper care for bike and other outside equipment.
- Wash cat or dog.
- Train pets.
- Carry in the grocery sacks.
- Get self up in the morning and to bed at night on own.
- Learning to be polite, courteous, and to share; respect others.
- Responsibilities like carrying own lunch money and notes back to school.
- Leave the bathroom in order. Hang up clean towels.
- Do simple ironing of flat pieces.
- Wash down walls and scrub floors.

Tasks for eight and nine-year-olds

- Fold napkins properly and set silverware properly.
- Mop or buff the floor.
- Clean Venetian blinds.
- Help rearrange furniture. Help plan the layout.
- Run own bath water.
- Help others with their work when asked.
- Straighten out own closet and drawers.
- Shop for and select own clothing and shoes with parent.
- Change school clothes without being told.
- Fold blankets
- Sew buttons.

- Sew rips in seams.
- Clean storage room.
- Clean up animal “messes” in the yard and house.
- Begin to read recipes and cook for the family.
- Baby-sit for short periods of time as mother’s helper.
- Cut flowers and make a centerpiece.
- Pick fruit off trees.
- Build a campfire, get items ready to cook.
- Paint fence or shelves.
- Help write simple letters.
- Help with defrosting and cleaning refrigerator.
- Feed the baby.
- Write thank you notes.
- Bathe younger brother or sister.
- Polish silverware, copper or brass items.
- Clean patio furniture.
- Wax living room furniture.

Tasks for nine and ten-year-olds

- Change sheets on the bed and put dirty sheets in the hamper.
- Operate the washer and dryer.
- Measure detergent and bleach.
- Buy groceries with a list and comparative price shop.
- Cross streets unassisted.
- Keeping own appointments (dentist, school, etc. and making them within bike distance).
- Preparing deserts from box mixes.
- Preparing a family meal.
- Receiving and answering own mail.
- Pouring and making tea, coffee, and juice.
- Waiting on guests.
- Planning own birthday and other parties.
- Simple first aid use.
- Doing neighborhood chores.
- Sewing, knitting, weaving (even using a sewing machine).
- Do chores without a reminder.
- Learning banking and to be thrifty and trustworthy.
- Wash the family car.

Tasks for ten and eleven-year olds

- Earn own money. (baby-sit, yard work)
- Be home alone.
- Handle sums of money up to \$5.00 honestly. (in 2010 probably \$25.00)
- Able to take city bus.
- Proper conduct when staying overnight with a friend.
- Pack own suitcase.

- Responsible for personal hobby.
- Able to handle self properly when in public places alone or with peers. (movies, etc.)

Tasks for eleven and twelve-year-olds

- Joining outside organizations, doing assignments and attending meetings.
- Able to take responsibility as a leader.
- Put siblings to bed and dress them.
- Clean pool and pool area.
- Respect other's property.
- Run own errands.
- Mow the lawn.
- Help build things and do the family errands.
- Clean oven and stove.
- Able to schedule ample time for studies.
- Buy own sweets or treats.
- Responsible for paper route.
- Checking and adding oil to car or lawn mower.

Tasks for junior high students

- Able to determine how late to stay up during the week.
- Also, able to determine how late he should be out for evening gatherings through mutual parent-child discussion and agreement.
- Complete responsibility for preparing family meals.
- Social awareness: good health, exercise, necessary rest, correct weight, nutritious food, physical examinations.
- Anticipate the needs of others and initiate the appropriate action.
- Realistic acceptance of capabilities and limitations.
- Self-respect or individual worth.
- Responsibility for one's decisions.
- Mutual respect, loyalty and honesty in the family.

I've used this list for almost thirty years after receiving it at a parent education meeting.

Kids Talk is a newspaper column dealing with early childhood development issues written by Maren Stark Schmidt. Ms. Schmidt founded a Montessori school and holds a Masters of Education from Loyola College in Maryland. She has over twenty-five years experience working with young children and holds teaching credentials from the Association Montessori Internationale. Sign up for Kids Talk On-line Newsletter at www.KidsTalkNews.com.