

Creating Time When You Have None

Get Help with Chores

In addition to to-do lists never ending, neither do chores. Don't let yourself drown in this endless cycle. There are many ways to make chores more manageable.

Recruit the Troops

I gave my daughter age-appropriate chores. It developed lifelong habits. Did her college roommates have these? Not so much.

Children and Chores

These charts list what kids are capable of. What you ask them to do may be limited by how many stickers you have to put on a chore chart. Even the youngest child can get into the chore habit.

It can be a struggle sometimes, but it gets easier and is worth your time. Besides, young children love working alongside their parent. Here's a list of what they should be able to do by age. You can choose some or all of these chores to work into their schedule.

Under Age 2

Get diaper (preschool will make them do this so may as well start now)	Put toys and books in bins
Put dirty clothes in hamper (use low baskets)	Turn off the TV
Wipe feet before coming inside	Close low cabinet doors and drawers
Hang up towel on hook	Pick up and dispose of trash

Ages 3–5

Previous chores (except diaper) plus:	
Make bed by pulling over comforter	Put games and pieces in boxes
Put books on bookshelves	Take dirty dishes to kitchen counter
Help unload dishwasher	Wipe down play table
Mop up spills	Take backpacks to and from car
Fill pet water and dry food	Rinse out sinks and tubs
Remove clothes from dryer	Take clean clothes to room
Dust low furniture	Help fold laundry (if you do that)

Ages 6–9

Previous chores plus:	
Make their bed	Help make breakfast
Set and clear the table	Simple cooking tasks (e.g., rinsing vegetables)
Put dishes in the dishwasher	Wipe kitchen table and counter
Wipe inside microwave	Pick up trash in car

Ages 6–9 (cont.)

Take out trash	Sweep or vacuum kitchen and bath
Clean smudges from walls and doors	Put away groceries
Bring in groceries from car	Sweep or vacuum floors/shake rugs
Straighten their bedroom	Prepare recyclables for pickup
Empty wastebaskets	Match socks from dryer (unless of course all the socks are the same color for simplicity)
Put dirty clothes hampers with household laundry	Vacuum car

Ages 10–13

Previous chores plus:	
Pour meal beverages (yes, I left this for older kids to avoid mad-rush morning disasters)	Help hand-wash dishes
Make lunch for school	Unload dishwasher
Wipe down kitchen counters	Clean pet spaces

Sort, wash, and fold laundry	Clean bathroom and shower
Vacuum	Take out trash and recycling
Clean bedroom closet	Vacuum furniture

Ages 14+

Previous chores plus:	
Clean bathrooms	Prepare meals
Sew on buttons and mend clothes	Organize closet

Seasonal/Yearly Chores

Following is a list of chores that need to be done only in certain seasons. As soon as she could walk, my daughter loved to work outside with me.

With a tiny urban garden, we could have plants and flowers. Younger than age two, my daughter loved any bug. We had snails, common to poor urban soil. Gardening wisdom is to countersink a small container, fill it with beer, and let the snail drown happy. I thought drunk snails were a bad example. Instead, her job was to collect them in a pail, which we would then relocate during a walk in the woods later.

She could also pick up outside toys. I must not have been that firm because one early morning, I heard a radio blaring. I tracked the sound to a plastic Fisher Price radio that had been left out in the rain and short-circuited. All night long, apparently. The radio was toast, but the upside was that the raccoon family under the porch moved out.

Older-age seasonal chores can include the following:

Help with planting (3+)	Clean garage (14+)
Putting away toys (3+)	Mow lawn (14+)
Shovel snow (9+)	Wash the car (14+)
Maintain the compost pile (9+)	Turn mattress (14+)

My daughter loved chore charts. Even during high school, she enjoyed banging through them and the satisfaction of checking them off.

Reading this list can also make you feel better for all that they are contributing already.