

Skill-Building Opportunities:

Doing Chores

Question: My daughter can't seem to get her chores done unless I nag her. How can we avoid this daily battle?

Is history repeating itself? Remember your own parents going through this with you? Here's why it's important: the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that engaging in regular household chores is good because it promotes a sense of responsibility in the child and helps her feel as though she's an essential part of the family.

And helping children to become increasingly accountable for their learning and actions is an important component of helping children to become self-directed, engaged learners.

Self-Directed, Engaged Learning: It is through learning that we can realize our potential. As the world changes, so can we, for as long as we live and as long as we learn.

1

Explain why the chore is important.

Talk with your child to clearly define the what, when, where and why of the tasks involved in the chore(s). Help her have a greater appreciation for the task by explaining why it needs to be done. For example:

- "Please put your dirty clothes in the laundry basket so I don't have to search all over the house to find them."
- "We need to wipe up the crumbs on the table so we don't get bugs."

Your child will be more cooperative if you leave a little room for her to innovate the "how" in carrying out the task.

2

Catching children doing positive things.

Acknowledge your child's successes in finishing chores. For example:

- "You did everything we agreed upon without any reminders. Thank you."
- "The table looks so clean. I can tell you took the time to do your job well."

3

Praising strategies, not intelligence.

Carol Dweck of Stanford University found that adults who praise children for their personality ("you are smart," "you are so talented") develop what she calls a fixed mindset. They begin to believe that these characteristics are inborn and can't be

changed. As a result, they want to cling to these labels and become less willing to try things that are hard if they might not seem as smart. On the other hand, children who are praised for their effort (“you tried so hard”) or their strategies (“you figured out how to put your sock on by yourself”) develop a growth mindset where they view their abilities and intelligence as something that can be changed. Children who have a growth mindset are more likely to try hard in the face of challenges.

Praise your child for the strategies she used in approaching her chores.

- “You figured out how many forks to put on the table by counting how many people are here!”

4

Giving children freedom to make mistakes and learn from them.

Children may not complete chores in the most efficient or accurate manner. Help them learn from their mistakes. You can ask questions to help your child learn. For example:

- “What can you do differently next time?”
- “What went well? What could have been better?”

5

Giving children time to help teach and learn from each other.

When possible, let her teach younger siblings and other family members how to perform their household tasks or demonstrate her strategies for doing a job well.