

AVOIDING THE **CHORE WARS**

AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES • PARENTING HELP • KIDS' QUIZ

CHORES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

by Susan Yates

I love when unexpected moments offer a great “Ah-ha!”

I’d been doing laundry all day and still wasn’t finished. As I began to sort my son’s T-shirts, I realized with growing alarm that I’d inadvertently washed his sister’s red skirt with his clothes. His shirts all had a pink glow. *Maybe he won’t notice*, I hoped.

No such luck.

“Mom!” he wailed when he saw his pile. “These shirts are pink! Please leave my clothes alone!”

Ah-ha!

“Great idea!” I responded. “From now on, you do your own laundry.”

And so our older kids began to wash their own clothes. Their clothes weren’t neatly folded or ironed, but they were clean. They learned how to sort, what to wash in hot water, how to dry different items. It was an unexpected lesson in transferring responsibility and instilling life skills.

Every parent longs to raise confident kids and eventually mature adults. Kids build that necessary confidence by learning to do things for themselves. Start with these first steps:

START NOW

Training begins at an early age and is gradual. A 3-year-old can clear his dish from the table. A 5-year-old can make her bed. Show her how to do it. Repeat several times. Then step back and praise her like crazy. It won’t be perfect or anything like how you do it. But what matters is that *she* did it.

Play dates can wreak havoc on the host home. Take 10 minutes before you leave and have your child help put away toys. Encourage him to clean up after himself any time he visits someone else’s home.

When our kids started going to school, they began to make their own lunches. Of course I watched what went into them, but they did the work.

My neighbor Lisa has two young sons. Early in the morning they run to our elderly neighbor’s home, pick up her newspaper from the street and stick it in her door. Not only is Lisa training them in responsibility, but she’s also teaching them to be thoughtful. Keep an eye out for similar opportunities.

WHAT’S INSIDE

2 CHORES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4 CHORE CHART IDEAS

7 CHORE CARDS

8 AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES

Do you know which chores your child can do?

10 GOOD HEART-KEEPING

A family devotion

14 CHORES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FAMILY LIFE

A Q&A with Focus on the Family’s counseling staff

GRADUALLY INCREASE RESPONSIBILITY

As kids get older, regular household chores become a key part of teaching them responsibility. Create a list of assignments and who is responsible for them. Post the chart where everyone can see it. It helps to rotate the chores weekly and sometimes even permit siblings to trade tasks.

My friend Will is teaching his 8-year-old son to mow the lawn. His son doesn't do it perfectly, and Will spends a lot of time and energy supervising, but the child is learning the value of hard work as his dad coaches him.

USE AFFIRMATION AND LAUGHTER

Chores aren't always enjoyable, so it helps if you can add a touch of fun to the process. Put the timer on and have a race to pick up the toys. Plan a family trip for ice cream as a reward after a marathon chore day. Make up silly songs or

rhymes as you do housework. Laugh at yourself whenever you can. And praise your kids: "I'm so proud of you for picking up the mess in your room." "I appreciate your getting in before curfew." "Every day, I see you becoming more responsible!"

KEEP THE LONG-RANGE GOAL IN VIEW

Our primary job is to raise a responsible adult. Small kids may pitch a fit and our teens may roll their eyes when chore time arrives, but remember that what our children think of us now is not nearly as important as what they will think of us 20 years from now. We'll likely make mistakes. Realize that you are making small deposits in the lives of your children, deposits that one day reap big dividends.

Susan Yates is the author of several parenting books. Copyright © 2011 by Susan Yates. Used by permission.



FAITH • PARENTING • MARRIAGE

Love the adventure

For great marriage and parenting advice, subscribe to *Focus on the Family* magazine. Available now for a gift of any amount.

Subscribe today!

FocusOnTheFamily.com/subscribe

CHORE CHART IDEAS



Sample of a dry-erase chart using the included template and icons

DRY-ERASE CHART

Print and customize a chore chart for each child using the chore chart pages in this booklet. When finished, place the chart in a standard 8x10 picture frame purchased from a craft store or thrift store. Use a scrap of ribbon or string to attach a dry-erase marker to the frame. Mark off daily chores—then wipe the glass clean when the next week begins.

POCKET CHART

Take a sheet of poster board and affix a week's worth of pockets for each child. Pockets can be constructed out of fabric, cardboard or clear plastic. Keep track of daily chores with "chore cards" stored in each pocket. You can print premade cards from this booklet, or make your

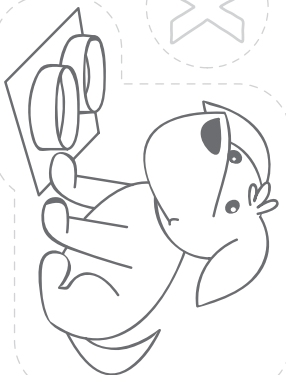
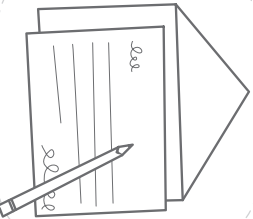
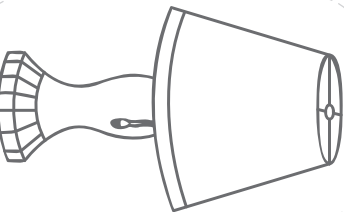
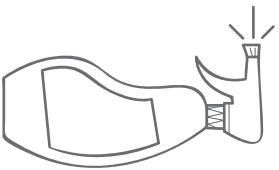
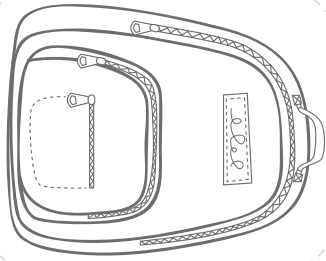
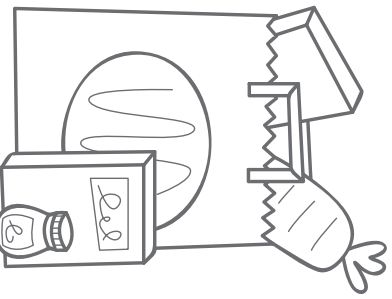
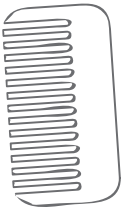
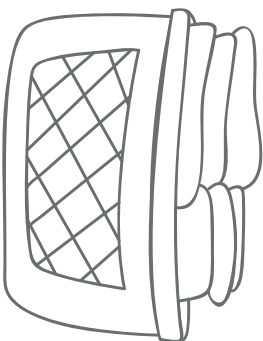
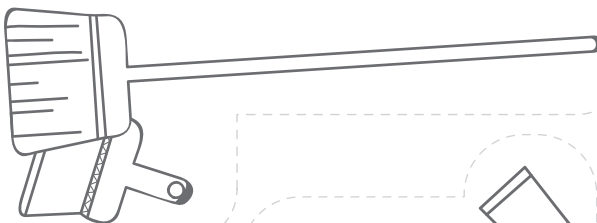
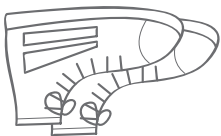
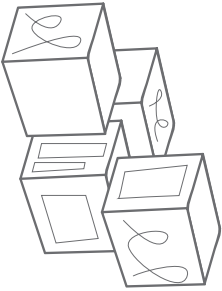
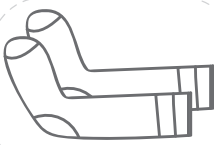
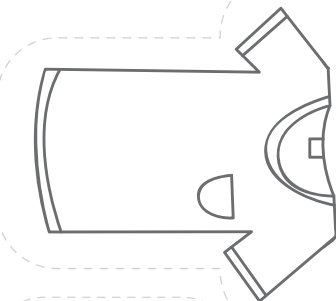
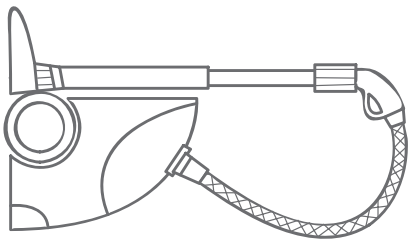
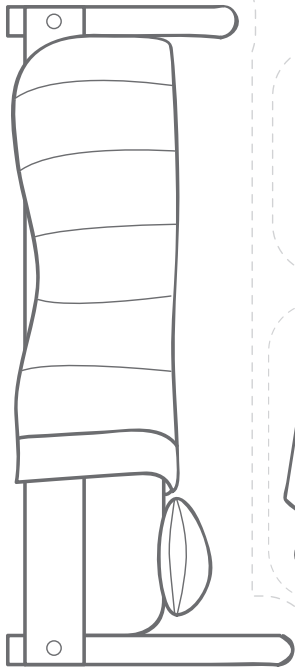
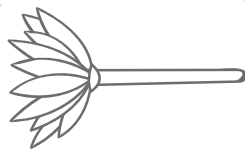
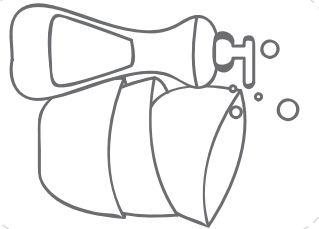
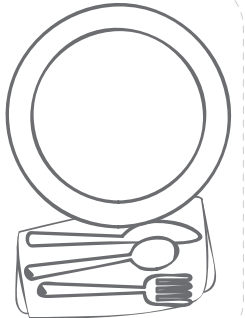
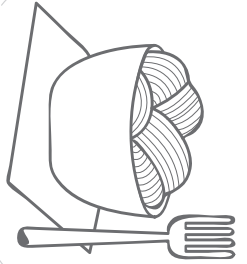
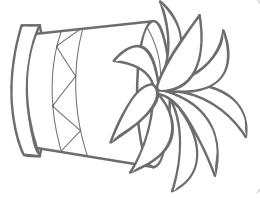
own using cardboard or index cards. When chore time comes around, give each child his or her day's chores and have your child return them to that day's pocket as he or she finishes.

Alternative: If a child has the same chores every day, make "chore sticks" using large Popsicle sticks and store them in a designated cup for each child.

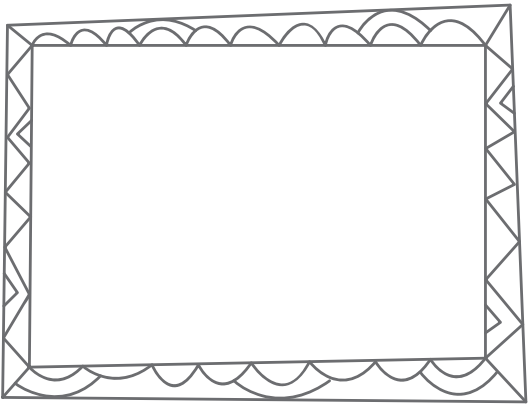
CHALKBOARD CHART

Paint a smooth sheet of wood or medium density fiberboard with chalkboard paint, found at a hobby store or home center. Create the basic lines and labels of your chart using white paint or chalk. To make these features permanent, carefully seal these areas with a latex-based polyurethane.

CHORE ICONS



1 2 3 4 5 6 7



M	T	W	TH	F	S
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					

CHORE CARDS

Color then cut out cards along the dotted lines and spread them face down on the table.

Have each child draw a card, do the chore and return for another until chores are complete.

Dust the living room furniture 	Replace dirty kitchen and bathroom towels with fresh ones	Unload dishwasher
Put away toys in yard 	Turn off any lights or electronics not in use	Set the table 
Fold a piece of paper in half, and make a thank-you card for someone in your family	Clean mirrors	Swap chore cards with your brother or sister
Wipe down kitchen table and counters 	Fill the pet's food dish 	Park bicycles where they belong
Put away all jackets and shoes	Mop the floor	Empty bathroom and bedroom wastebaskets 
Clean front of kitchen cabinets	Ask your parent for a hug	Ask your parent for a treat
Make your bed 	Pick up the toys and clothes on your bedroom floor	Find a place to hide and call for someone to find you
Do 10 jumping jacks	Tidy the bookshelf	Sweep the floor 
Straighten the sofa cushions, floor rugs and window curtains	Sort dirty laundry into dark and light colors 	Find three items that need to be put away properly
Read a passage from your favorite book	Clean toilets	Water the plants 

AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES

Do you know which chores your child can do?

by Sheila Seifert

What chores and lifeskills are important for your children to learn, and what are they capable of doing? This guide reflects the types of chores and skills that many children in these age ranges are capable of completing. Remember that every child matures at a different pace. Adjust this chart to what you know about your children's abilities, and realize that no child should do all of the chores listed below every day.

AGES 2 AND 3

- ☐ Assist in making their beds
- ☐ Pick up playthings with your supervision
- ☐ Take their dirty laundry to the laundry basket
- ☐ Fill a pet's water and food bowls
(with supervision)
- ☐ Help a parent clean up spills and dirt
- ☐ Dust

AGES 4 AND 5

Note: At this age, a child can start to be trained to use a family chore chart.

- ☐ Get dressed with minimal parental help
- ☐ Make their bed with minimal parental help
- ☐ Bring their things from the car to the house
- ☐ Set the table (with supervision)
- ☐ Clear the table (with supervision)
- ☐ Help a parent prepare food
- ☐ Help a parent carry in the light groceries
- ☐ Match socks in the laundry
- ☐ Answer the phone with parental assistance
- ☐ Be responsible for a pet's food and water bowl
- ☐ Hang up towels in the bathroom
- ☐ Clean floors with a dry mop or sweep them
with a small broom

AGES 6 AND 7

- ☐ Make their bed every day
- ☐ Brush teeth
- ☐ Comb hair
- ☐ Choose the day's outfit and get dressed
- ☐ Write thank-you notes with supervision
- ☐ Be responsible for a pet's food, water
and exercise
- ☐ Vacuum individual rooms
- ☐ Wet mop individual rooms
- ☐ Fold laundry with supervision
- ☐ Put their laundry in their drawers and closets
- ☐ Put away dishes from the dishwasher
- ☐ Help prepare food with supervision
- ☐ Empty trash cans
- ☐ Answer the phone with supervision

AGES 8 TO 11

- ☐ Take care of personal hygiene
- ☐ Keep bedroom clean
- ☐ Be responsible for homework
- ☐ Be responsible for belongings
- ☐ Write thank-you notes for gifts
- ☐ Set alarm clock before going to bed
- ☐ Wash dishes
- ☐ Wash the family car with supervision
- ☐ Prepare a few easy meals on their own
- ☐ Clean the bathroom with supervision
- ☐ Rake leaves
- ☐ Learn to use the washer and dryer
- ☐ Put all laundry away with supervision
- ☐ Take the trash can to the curb for pick up

AGES 12 AND 13

- ☐ Take care of personal hygiene, belongings and homework
- ☐ Write invitations and thank-you notes
- ☐ Set their alarm clock
- ☐ Maintain personal items, such as recharging batteries
- ☐ Change bedsheets
- ☐ Keep their rooms tidy and do a biannual deep cleaning
- ☐ Change light bulbs
- ☐ Change the vacuum bag
- ☐ Dust, vacuum, clean bathrooms and do dishes
- ☐ Clean mirrors
- ☐ Mow the lawn with supervision
- ☐ Baby-sit (in most states)
- ☐ Prepare an occasional family meal

AGES 14 AND 15

- ☐ Responsible for all personal chores for ages 12 and 13
- ☐ Responsible for library card and books
- ☐ Do assigned housework without prompting
- ☐ Do yard work as needed
- ☐ Baby-sit
- ☐ Occasionally prepare food—from making a grocery list and buying the items (with supervision) to serving a meal
- ☐ Wash windows with supervision

AGES 16 TO 18

- ☐ Responsible for all personal chores for ages 14 and 15
- ☐ Responsible to earn spending money
- ☐ Responsible for purchasing their own clothes
- ☐ Responsible for maintaining any car they drive (e.g., gas, oil changes, tire pressure, etc.)
- ☐ Do housework as needed
- ☐ Do yard work as needed
- ☐ Prepare family meals—from grocery list to serving it—as needed
- ☐ Deep cleaning of household appliances, such as defrosting the freezer, as needed

GOOD HEART-KEEPING

A family devotion

by Jeanne Gowen Dennis

Our hearts are like messy rooms sometimes.
We fill them with junk and hope nobody notices.
But God sees what's in every corner, and
He wants to help us clean up.

LIGHT

We sometimes try to hide a messy room. We shut the door or dim the lights so it doesn't look too bad. But we can't clean in the dark. We need to let light in.

Psalm 139:23 says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart!" Letting the light of truth shine in your heart is the first step in cleaning.

And that light really helps you find your way around that mess! Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

TRASH

Yuck, that banana peel doesn't belong here! When we clean, we must get rid of the trash.

What sort of junk have you strewn around your heart? Maybe you picked up bad habits or developed a rotten attitude. Throw it away! The Bible urges us to "do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent" (Philippians 2:14-15).

CLUTTER

Books in your bed, clothes on the floor, homework everywhere—all of this stuff is important. You just need to put it in the right place.

Sometimes, we clutter our lives with good things: school, friends, activities. But Jesus tells us to "seek *first* the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33, emphasis added). If you rearrange your priorities—with God in first place—you won't trip over the other stuff.

HAND-ME-DOWNS

You're growing. Clothes that fit last year might be too small now.

Paul recalls, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1 Corinthians 13:11). Are there childish behaviors—such as selfishness or complaining—that you've outgrown? Some of your actions might not "fit" the mature Christian you're growing into.

COBWEBS

See those cobwebs up in the corner? Spiders weave webs to trap their prey.

When we allow ourselves to think about things we shouldn't, it's like allowing Satan to build cobwebs on our hearts that can trap us in sin. If you feel tempted, ask God to protect your heart by sweeping these cobwebs away. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."

MUDDY SNEAKERS

The strangest things stick to shoes: mud, wet leaves, chewing gum. This stuff can really mess up your carpet.

Just like muddy sneakers, bad influences can stain your heart. If you think like people who don't love Jesus, you'll start to act like them, too. Be careful about the TV shows you watch and the songs you listen to.

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

DUST BUNNIES

The room is getting clean. But what's that under the bed?

Sometimes our sins are concealed. They may be ingrained, or they be mistakes we've made so many times we don't think about them anymore. We need to pray like David, asking God to "Cleanse me from my hidden faults" (Psalm 19:12, HCSB).

DIRT

You've cleaned your room, but your clothes and hands are still dirty!

We can clean up our behavior and our attitude, but we're all still sinners. Only Jesus can truly clean our hearts. When we accept His gift of salvation, the Holy Spirit dwells inside us, helping us conquer sin. We'll still fail sometimes, but if we confess our sins, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Unlike your room, you'll never have to clean your heart alone. Christ is always with you, and He can't wait to scrub you spotless.

The full version of this article appeared in Adventures in Odyssey Clubhouse magazine. Check out "Cleaning Tips" at ClubhouseMagazine.com/truth-pursuer to learn more about what the Bible says about having a clean heart.

© 2014 Jeanne Gowen Dennis

Subscribe today!

Award-winning *Adventures in Odyssey Clubhouse* magazine features age-appropriate stories from a Christian worldview that kids can't find anywhere else.

Children 8 to 12 can read exciting fiction, inspiring stories of real kids, fun animal facts, silly jokes and articles to help them grow closer to God.

ClubhouseMagazine.com



Out of Order

Are messy habits messing up your life?
Take this quiz to find out! **by Megan Breedlove**



1 It's almost time for soccer practice, and you need to find your shin guards.

You:

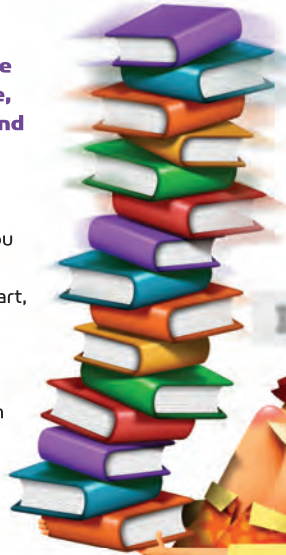
- a. look in your duffel bag—that's where you always put them.
- b. tear your room apart, then finally find them under the bed.
- c. get in the car and hope Coach brings an extra pair.

2 Mom tells you to clean your room before supper. **You:**

- a. gather everything into a pile and throw it into the closet.
- b. relax—she obviously meant supper tomorrow.
- c. fold your clothes and empty the trash can.

8 It's hard to get up early for school. **In order to save time, you:**

- a. sleep in the clothes you plan on wearing the next day.
- b. leave your coat at school so you don't have to find it in the morning.
- c. pack your backpack the night before.



LIBRARY



5 Where did that question go? It was here somewhere . . . um, you know what, just skip to No. 6.

6 Every week, your grandma takes you to the library. **You:**

- a. check out two or three books from your favorite authors.
- b. grab as many books as you can carry.
- c. wish you could take books home, but you still have overdue books from last month.

10 There's a new video game on sale, but you don't have enough money. **You:**

- a. beg Mom to buy it for you.
- b. convince your brother to pay half and let him take the first turn.
- c. save up your allowance until you can afford it.



3

Your teacher gives you a homework assignment on Friday that's due Monday. You:

- a. finish it (OK, start it) on the bus Monday morning.
- b. do it as soon as you get home on Friday.
- c. put it off until Sunday night and have to skip youth group.

9

Your friend's dance recital is two months away. You:

- a. write it on your calendar.
- b. forget and accidentally make plans with someone else.
- c. ask her every week if the recital is this Thursday.

4

You're baking a birthday cake for a friend. You:

- a. forget to preheat the oven until the last minute.
- b. carefully follow the directions on the box.
- c. leave out the eggs, because eggs are gross.



11

Dad asks you to get ready for church. You:

- a. take a shower, comb your hair and brush your teeth.
- b. smell yourself and decide you're OK.
- c. splash water on your face and change into a clean shirt.

7

Your whole family is cleaning the garage . . . on a Saturday. You:

- a. "conveniently" get sick and spend the morning watching cartoons.
- b. make a game out of who can sort piles the fastest.
- c. move slowly and grumble the whole time.



1.	a=2	b=1	c=0
2.	a=1	b=0	c=2
3.	a=0	b=2	c=1
4.	a=1	b=2	c=0
5.	a=0	b=1	c=2
6.	a=2	b=1	c=0
7.	a=0	b=2	c=1
8.	a=1	b=0	c=2
9.	a=2	b=0	c=1
10.	a=0	b=1	c=2
11.	a=2	b=0	c=1

Add Up Your Score!

Yikes! (0 to 7 points)

Your disorganization causes you to miss out on a lot of fun because you spend too much time trying to fix your own messes. Why not spend some of that time doing things right in the first place?

"No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness."

—Hebrews 12:11, HCSB

Oops! (8 to 14 points)

You try to be organized and plan ahead, but sometimes, it just doesn't happen. Keep trying, and don't get discouraged. Remember, God can help you!

"May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy." —Colossians 1:11, HCSB

Yay! (15 to 20 points)

You're so organized that day-to-day life runs smoothly. Great job! Try using your gift of tidiness to help others (as long as they want your help).

"Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and whoever looks after his master will be honored." —Proverbs 27:18, HCSB

© ILLUSTRATION & DESIGN BY JOHN CORBITT

CHORES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FAMILY LIFE

a Q&A with Focus on the Family's
counseling staff

Q: I'm often too tired to make my children do their homework or chores, and my children have gotten a lot of lazy habits. What can I do?

A: This may sound like a simplistic answer, but there's no way around it: You must establish clear rules on chores and homework, and then follow through. Be consistent and firm, even when you're tired. Without clear boundaries and consequences, your children are heading toward a difficult future. Responsibility and self-discipline are critical traits for success in college and future jobs.

To get started, hold a family meeting with your kids. Tell them you love them and that you are responsible to prepare them for life. Admit that you haven't been doing a very good job and that you're going to try to rectify that by establishing some new household rules. For example, you might decide that homework and chores must be done before kids can do "fun" activities such as playing video games or going out with friends.

You can also build in some incentives using a simple point system. When your kids complete a chore to your satisfaction or receive a good grade at school, they earn points. These points can be cashed in for privileges or enjoyable activities like going to a family-friendly movie on the weekend or a trip to the mall.

It's critical to remember that everything depends on your willingness to follow through, especially when you don't feel like being tough. Don't allow yourself to get sucked into arguments about the finer points of the new standards. To avoid this, we'd suggest that

you put everything in writing—the rules, the rewards, the consequences. Each of you should sign the contract and post it on the refrigerator. If you stick to the plan faithfully for a few weeks, you should start to see some positive changes in behavior.

Q: Is it appropriate to pay children for doing household chores? Growing up, I received an allowance, but my husband says that kids need to work without being paid because that's part of being a family.

A: There's no right answer here. Some parents believe in paying an allowance; others pay kids for individual chores. Still others don't pay anything at all, but give their children money for purchases based on their overall attitude and helpfulness.

Whatever system you adopt, it's important to remember the goal of preparing your children to live in the real world—the world of work, taxes, tithing and investments. In that world nobody is going to pay them for making their beds or taking out the trash. On the other hand, they will be paid for things like managing a group of employees, tuning up somebody's car, or selling a pair of shoes to a very demanding customer.

With that in mind, we suggest that kids should perform certain household tasks simply because they are part of the family. This could include jobs like keeping their room clean, helping prepare meals, washing clothes and taking out the trash.

On the other hand, it's fine to pay children for chores that demand more time and energy—contributions to the life of the household that “go beyond the call of duty.” This might include activities like mowing the lawn, washing the car, or, in the case of a responsible teenager, baby-sitting a younger sibling for an afternoon.

Q: Whenever we've paid kids for doing chores, it seems they just want to waste their earnings on candy and cheap toys. How can we teach our kids about responsible use of money?

A: Whether you give an allowance or pay for specific chores, you can show children how to practice good stewardship with what we call the “10-10-10-70” plan.

First, they should set aside 10 percent of their money for a tithe. Explain that the Bible tells us that everything we have really belongs to God. Because we love God, we give Him the “first fruits” of our earnings. Long ago, this meant that a farmer would give the best fruit from his orchard as an offering. Today we dedicate the first 10th of our earnings to God's work and the needs of our church.

Next, your kids should be encouraged to set aside a second 10 percent of their money for savings and investment. Take them to a neighborhood bank and open a savings account. Then pick up a kid-friendly book on saving and investing—one that explains in simple language how interest compounds over time. When they're a bit older, you might want to help them open a brokerage account, helping them understand the concepts of investment and building a diversified portfolio.

The third “10” in the “10-10-10-70” plan should be dedicated to giving. From a biblical perspective, “giving” is different from “tithing.” In “giving” we use another portion of our resources to help those in need. God clearly tells us that Christians have a responsibility to help the poor, and we should begin

instilling this principle in our children's minds from a very early age. There's no shortage of excellent charities and Christian ministries to which your kids can direct this portion of their income. Your children could also reserve some of their “giving” money for the needs of their own community such as a local rescue mission or a family at church who is experiencing financial difficulties.

The remaining money can be used at their own discretion. Naturally, you will want to teach them to spend wisely by purchasing items that have lasting value rather than cheap toys that will end up in the trash after a few weeks. You should also help them learn the critical concept of “delayed gratification.” Explain that by resisting the temptation to immediately spend their money, they can save up enough to buy something they really want, like a quality baseball glove or a new bicycle.

Q: How can parents handle their own division of household chores, especially in light of masculine and feminine roles in marriage?

A: Christian couples sometimes think that such male/female distinctions are biblical rather than traditional. But the Bible doesn't specifically support the notion that only women must cook and only men should calculate the budget and finances. Yes, God designed a fundamental uniqueness between male and female, but when it comes to simple household chores, many couples simply take their cues from their parents' example. This can cause problems if unspoken assumptions are allowed to explode into anger over household responsibilities.

As we see it, there is no “right” solution to the problem of dividing up the household chores. But we do suggest some general guidelines:

Communication. First and most importantly, talk about this part of your marriage. Even the simple act of discussing and divvying up the workload can

lessen stress and conflict. Discuss assumptions, expectations and personal preferences. Approach the situation as equal partners and work out an arrangement that's acceptable to both of you.

Think positively. Remind yourselves that this is not an impossible problem. Once you've made up your minds to share the load, you'll likely find the rest of the process unfolding in a smooth and natural way.

Consider the rewards. Tackling chores together eases the burden. This is especially true when both husband and wife work outside the home. A workable system will leave you with more time for togetherness and leisure activities.

Focus on strengths. Rather than emphasizing "male" and "female" chores, talk about which jobs you enjoy or don't mind doing. Is there anything for which you have a certain knack? Anything you'd really prefer not to do? Let natural tendencies guide choices.

Allow for exceptions. Helping each other out with chores during times of busyness or illness is always appreciated, and is usually reciprocated.

Stay flexible. No matter how fair and equal things seem at the start, you may have to make adjustments along the way. One spouse who was at home may begin a new job. Another may experience an illness or injury.

Don't go strictly by the numbers. Fair and equal doesn't necessarily mean "one for you, one for me." Remember that some chores are more difficult and time-consuming than others.

Write it down. Making a list of what needs to be done is essential. It's too easy to forget who's supposed to do what. Be sure to include a chart that clearly communicates the division of labor in terms of "yours, mine, and ours."

A key to meeting the challenge of marriage is striving to understand each other and seeking to meet each other's needs. Household chores is a great area to put these principles into practice.

© 2010 – 2014 Focus on the Family

*Have a question about your marriage or your parenting?
Visit the Focus on the Family Help Center at **FamilyCusthelp.com** to find answers.*

FOCUS_{ON THE} FAMILY®
Helping families thrive.

FocusontheFamily.com