

Raising a Responsible Child

Instilling responsibility is one of the best things you can do to help your child be a winner!

1. **START EARLY** - Don't wait until your child is a teenager to insist that he help out with the family chores. It's far too late then! Even preschoolers can take responsibility for a few daily household chores. Be reasonable and give your child jobs he or she can handle - - no more, but no less.
2. **START SMALL** - It's true that a job will take more time if a small child does it than if you do it, but the objective is to teach your little one that there are jobs he is capable of doing. As a child's capacity for learning and carrying out responsibilities increases, you can help him stretch those capacities. Small jobs, added one at a time, will help your child feel like a valuable family member.
3. **DON'T DO EVERYTHING FOR YOUR CHILD** - When your children are old enough to dress themselves, they should be allowed to do it, even when you are in a hurry and even when they put together dreadful color combinations. Insist that they put their blocks, books, and socks where they belong every day. As they get older, you can teach them how to make a neater bed, but for now, be happy with the ability they show at a young age.
4. **LET THEM EXPERIENCE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF IRRESPONSIBILITY** Sometimes consequences can be painful, but you will be doing your child no favor if you give in to rules. If your child forgets to study for a test and wants to stay home sick, you must let the natural consequence teach him a lesson. If you allow him to stay home to study and take the test the next day, you'll be teaching him that someone will always cover for him if he doesn't do what he's supposed to do. Help him study for the next one!
5. **LET THEM EARN THEIR MONEY** - Get rid of the welfare state in your home. If they want extra money for a movie or skating, don't just give it to them. Instead, give them a job they can do to earn it. They may complain, but it's a valuable lesson for kids to learn that money comes from work, not parents.
6. **LET YOUR CHILD MAKE CHOICES** - Give your children situations that require them to make choices. If you want him to make wise decisions when he's on his own, get your child in the habit of thinking for himself now. Offer guidance and be patient.
7. **NOTICE AND APPRECIATE YOUR CHILD'S SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY** - Use lots of sincere praise over your child's performances. Let your child know that he does well and that you appreciate his effort in a job well done. When your child fulfills a commitment, praise him. A simple "Thanks for helping me with the dishes, I'm glad to have your help" is always appropriate!
8. **SET A GOOD EXAMPLE** - Kids need to see their parents put a high value on

accomplishment. If you value work and take pleasure in doing it, your kids will adopt the same attitude and their lives will be better for it. Work isn't bad - - it's not a punishment. Don't forget to occasionally "whistle while you work". It's good for kids to see Mom and Dad helping each other, too.

9. USE CHARTS OR REWARDS - Use charts to monitor assignments and work done so there is no confusion about who did or didn't do what. This also helps a child to clearly see his own improvement in performance of responsibilities. Young children can be rewarded with a sticker or check mark as they complete their chores.

10. INCLUDE CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY - Let children take part in the family decision-making process. Be sure everyone gets heard fairly and squarely and don't make fun of anyone's suggestions. Although you are still the final authority, you can compromise occasionally with your children. Carefully take your children's desires and opinions into account. It's fun to watch their ideas mature.

11. ESTABLISH HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY RULES - The rules you make for your family will say a lot about your values and priorities. Make it a rule that chores and homework come before TV, and stick with this rule.

Remember that responsible children aren't produced overnight. It's a step-by-step process that takes many years. All that's required is a consistent effort by patient, loving parents who respect their kids too much to let them be infantile when they are ready to be nearly adult.

Source: How to Make Your Child a Winner, by Victor Cline.

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