Chores for kids by age

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Two- and three-year-olds can put toys in a bin and wipe a spill; by 5 most can make a bed, set the table and match socks; 8-year-olds can load the dishwasher and vacuum; 10 to 12 can do a load of laundry; and from 12 a child can start on a push mower, the AAP says.

- Age: Ages 2 to 3 · Chores they can usually do: Put toys back in a bin; Put dirty clothes in the laundry basket; Wipe up a small spill with a cloth; Pour a scoop of food in the pet's bowl, with you; Put books back on a low shelf; Feed themselves with a spoon and an open cup
- Age: Ages 4 to 5 · Chores they can usually do: Make their bed; Set the table; Clear their own plate after a meal; Match socks; Water plants with a small can; Dust with a sock on their hand; Tidy their room, one kind of thing at a time
- Age: Ages 6 to 7 · Chores they can usually do: Unload the dishwasher (a grown-up takes the knives); Fold towels and T-shirts; Sweep with a small broom and dustpan; Take out the recycling; Pack their own backpack; Make a sandwich; Put the groceries away
- Age: Ages 8 to 9 · Chores they can usually do: Load the dishwasher (you add the detergent); Vacuum a room; Wash dishes by hand in warm, not hot, water; Rake leaves; Heat food in the microwave; Pack their own lunch; Wipe the bathroom sink with a mild cleaner you hand them
- Age: Ages 10 to 12 · Chores they can usually do: Do a load of laundry, start to finish; Scramble eggs, with you at the stove; Change their own sheets; Clean the bathroom; Walk the dog; Mop a floor; Sew on a button
- Age: Ages 13 to 16 · Chores they can usually do: Mow the lawn with a push mower; Cook a simple dinner for the family; Do the grocery shopping from a list; Do their own laundry every week; Wash the car; Keep a budget for their own money; Look after a younger brother or sister for a short time, once you're comfortable

The linked chores have a step-by-step lesson in Peabody Life Skills, read aloud so a child can follow it alone. The ages are typical ones; start a job early beside you, and hand it over when they're ready.

Ages 2 to 3

Helping is the job. Short, one-step tasks done beside you, and lots of thank-yous.

- Put toys back in a bin
- Put dirty clothes in the laundry basket
- Wipe up a small spill with a cloth
- Pour a scoop of food in the pet's bowl, with you

- Put books back on a low shelf
- Feed themselves with a spoon and an open cup

Ages 4 to 5

The CDC's checklist for 5-year-olds includes simple chores like matching socks and clearing the table.

- Make their bed
- Set the table
- Clear their own plate after a meal
- Match socks
- Water plants with a small can
- Dust with a sock on their hand
- Tidy their room, one kind of thing at a time

Ages 6 to 7

Whole jobs, start to finish, with a quick check from you at the end.

- Unload the dishwasher (a grown-up takes the knives)
- Fold towels and T-shirts
- Sweep with a small broom and dustpan
- Take out the recycling
- Pack their own backpack
- Make a sandwich
- Put the groceries away

Ages 8 to 9

Jobs with a few steps and a little judgment, like where a dish goes so the water reaches it.

- Load the dishwasher (you add the detergent)
- Vacuum a room
- Wash dishes by hand in warm, not hot, water
- Rake leaves
- Heat food in the microwave
- Pack their own lunch
- Wipe the bathroom sink with a mild cleaner you hand them

Ages 10 to 12

Real household jobs, done alone once you've done them together a few times.

- Do a load of laundry, start to finish
- Scramble eggs, with you at the stove

- Change their own sheets
- Clean the bathroom
- Walk the dog
- Mop a floor
- Sew on a button

Ages 13 to 16

Running bits of the house: the jobs they'll need on their own one day. The AAP says 12 for a push mower and 16 for a riding one.

- Mow the lawn with a push mower
- Cook a simple dinner for the family
- Do the grocery shopping from a list
- Do their own laundry every week
- Wash the car
- Keep a budget for their own money
- Look after a younger brother or sister for a short time, once you're comfortable

Making chores stick

- Teach it once, properly. Show the whole job, then do it together, then watch. Each Life Skills lesson is already split into steps for exactly that.
- Same job, same time. A chore tied to a moment (bed before breakfast, the table before dinner) becomes a habit faster than one handed out when you notice.
- Leave their version alone. A bed they made beats a smooth one you fixed, and fixing it teaches them not to bother.
- Keep the risky part yours. Knives, detergent pods, the stove and the mower are a grown-up's until you decide otherwise; the lessons mark those steps.
- Say what they did. "You put every cup away" lands better than "good job".

Questions parents ask

What chores can a 5-year-old do?

The CDC's milestone checklist for 5-year-olds includes simple chores like matching socks and clearing the table after eating. Most can also how to make your bed, how to set the table and tidy their room, one kind of toy at a time.

At what age can a child mow the lawn?

The American Academy of Pediatrics says at least 12 for a push mower and 16 for a riding mower, and never to carry a child on a riding mower. The mowing lesson starts with shoes, eye and ear protection and clearing the lawn.

Should kids be paid for chores?

Families split this both ways. A common middle path is that everyday jobs are part of living in a family and extra jobs can earn money, which is a good start on a budget.

Is it free?

Peabody is free through the end of 2026, with no ads, and Life Skills needs no sign-up at all. What a child ticks and learns stays on their own device and is never sent anywhere.

Free at peabody.kids/chores-for-kids-by-age