

The things every child should know about chores and homework

Written by Marcia Humphrey

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I don't know what's happening at your house right now, but it feels like our family of five is moving 100 mph, and we are only a few weeks into the new school year! This year, two of our three children changed schools and statuses: Our oldest daughter started high school as a ninth grader, and our youngest daughter began middle school as a sixth grader. Our second grade son happily returned to the school he attended last year. Thankfully, everyone seems to be adjusting well.

That is, almost everyone. Every time I think about the fact that I have three kids in three different schools-that are not particularly close to one another-I feel a slight twinge of anxiety. (This is definitely one of the downsides to having your children spaced too far apart in age!) I have recurring nightmares about the kiddos forgetting their major school projects at home (all on the same day) and needing them delivered (all at precisely the same time) to avoid a failing grade. To keep that type of drama to a minimum, I decided it was a good time to review the family chore schedule and tighten it up. I realize that training children, of all ages, to value an orderly living space is an important component in having success at school, work, and in every area of life. In addition, fewer piles of clutter mean fewer places for homework assignments to get lost (or be left), right?

Mama says, "Clean the Bathroom After Using It." To keep the chores as nontoxic as

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possible for your little ones, store a pack of baby wipes in the bathroom, and have your child wipe off the vanity each night after bathing and brushing. In addition, use a spray bottle containing diluted dish soap to clean the tub-it's great for removing soap scum. Finally, train your family to close the lid on the toilet before flushing. (Did you know that with each open flush those toilet germs fly out of the toilet and onto your toothbrush and face towels? Yuck!)

Mama says, "Make Your Bed." In our house, breakfast is (only) served to those whose bed is made. Even a young child can smooth the covers and place the pillow in the center of the bed. Also, if your younger ones have trouble managing both the top sheet and the comforter, consider eliminating the top sheet, and using only the fitted sheet and comforter.

Mama says, "Sort and/or Wash Your Laundry." Even if your child is not ready to do the laundry solo, they can at least help to separate the light colors from the darks. When it comes to laundry duties, everyone can help with something; folding, matching socks, or emptying the dryer.

Requiring children to help with chores is a great way to teach responsibility. Write down their duties on a calendar or dry erase board and consider offering an allowance for a job well done. In addition, instruct your kids to complete their work with a good attitude --we sometimes offer extra bonuses for that). Whenever the kids get grumpy about cleaning, we remind them that they should consider it a privilege to help care for our home, because each day we all enjoy the blessing and benefit of sleeping, eating, and being loved under this roof. Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at low costs. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.