



## Making Everyday Household Chores Sweet

President David O. McKay said, "Let us realize the privilege to work is a gift, the power to work is a blessing, the love of work is success."

How do we teach our children how to work and more importantly, how to enjoy it?

### Make a Plan

Teaching our children how to work can and should start at a young age. We need to realize that in teaching our children, the point is not to have an impeccably clean house. The point is to teach them how to work. If the house gets clean along the way, it makes this process all the sweeter.

From all that needs to get done, decide which chores are:

- Daily: making beds, picking up toys, prepping for dinner, caring for pets, etc.
- Weekly: Deep cleaning bathrooms, laundry, vacuuming, etc.
- Monthly: Cleaning baseboards, washing windows and walls, etc.

Next, decide which chores are age appropriate.

While a five year old is capable of vacuuming, they may not be ready to tackle toilets just yet...or maybe yours is. Age appropriateness also depends on each individual child.

- Age 2: can clean up toys and generally put their things away
- Age 3: dress self, use toilet, begin to brush teeth, wipe walls and tables.
- Age 4: make bed, keep room clean.
- Age 5: vacuum, empty garbage cans, set and clear table.
- Age 6: take a shower, dust, water plants, load dishwasher, clean sinks.
- Age 7: wash dishes, clean toilets, floss teeth, pull weeds.
- Age 8: clean mirrors, comb hair and clip nails
- Age 9: mop floors, help with cooking, wash car, vacuum inside of car.
- Age 10: clean stove and oven, clean pet cages, mow the lawn.

And so on and so forth. This list can be tailored to any child in any family.

In the book, "The Parenting Breakthrough," by Merrilee Browne Boyack, chapter 4 is called *Getting Kids to Work: Chores and Beyond*. This entire chapter has practical ideas for getting kids, including teenagers to work. She says, "making home work a priority is crucial." Note, I did not say 'homework' but 'home work,' meaning the work we do around our home to contribute to the family unit. It is fascinating that parents spend incredible amounts of time monitoring school homework but completely ignore crucial work around the home." The author gives many examples of various charts that can be used. She recommends using a variety of methods. Here are some of the methods she suggests:

1. Pocket Charts: Each child has a chart with two pockets, to-do and done.
2. Zone Management: In this system, the house is divided into zones and each person is responsible for keeping his or her zone clean and tidy all the time. Zones rotate monthly.
3. Chore wheel: This is a rotating chart listing chores that change every week.
4. Random choice: With this method, the kids choose their chores each week in a random way such as popping a balloon with their chore inside.
5. Monthly rotation: This system works well for older kids. It gives them time to really learn the chore well.

These systems can all be tailored to fit your family's needs as well.

In this technologically advanced society we live in, there are even online chore charts that allow children and parents to log in, chart progress and set up rewards.

A few reference sites that have online chore charts are:

<http://myjobchart.com>

<http://childzilla.com>

<http://goalforit.com/chore-chart>

## Be Consistent and Persistent

Find what works for your family. What works for your next-door neighbor or even a sibling's family might be great, but it might not work for your family.

Make habits out of certain chores. For example, every day after breakfast we make our beds and brush our teeth. Every Tuesday each kid puts his/her own laundry away.

Decide what kind of incentive program will motivate your children best.

- Some children (usually older ones) are motivated by money and so an allowance could be implemented. This is a good way to teach children about money management and paying tithing as well.
- For young children, the reward of a trip to the park or other fun activity is a sufficient incentive.
- There are about as many ways to keep track of chores and incentives as there are chores to be done. When one method proves to be no longer effective, switch it up and try another method.
- The key to all of this is persistence. Sister Boyack says "Day after day, week after week, month after month, just keep plugging away at it. Some weeks will go great; others will be horrendous. Keep working at it. It will get better and easier. But it will never be perfect." We just need to keep trying! Our kids will be the better for it. They will leave our homes knowing the sweetness of work!

## Make it Fun!

- For younger children, consider making home work a game.
- Do a treasure hunt with clues leading to different rooms with assignments to be completed and some reward at the end.
- Play “duck, duck, chore,” and whoever is chosen has to run and complete some small chore before running back to the family circle.
- We don’t pay allowance in our family, but every once in a while, when we need chores done quickly, we will have what we call “power hour.” We set the timer for an hour and each child that finishes their chore list in that hour earns 5 dollars.
- Although we don’t normally pay them for daily and weekly chores, we do have “money jobs” that the kids can do if they want to earn extra money. These include jobs like washing baseboards, walls, blinds and windows. Decide what method(s) work for your family and stick to it. Remember that kids get bored. The perfect chore chart or reward system might work for a few months and then you might need to make a change.
- Have a switch day. The boys do the girls jobs and the girls do the boys jobs. It’s important that boys learn how to do laundry and cook and clean and that girls learn how to mow the lawn and change a tire.
- Crank up the music and work together...make it a family affair.

Stop feeling guilty about what you haven’t done and start doing something now.

## Be Flexible

Just when you have a system down that works for you family, children grow up, life gets more complicated, and we have to change our expectations.

- Teenagers are and should be busy with school, extracurricular activities and possibly even a job outside the home in their later years.
- Adjust their workload at home so they can fulfill all their duties.
- They may be so busy with after school practices, rehearsals and homework that it is only possible for them to household chores on the weekends.
- It is our responsibility as parents to teach children how to juggle all of their tasks. Letting them off too easily does not teach them management skills.
- Our sons and daughters are preparing to go to college, go on missions and be future fathers and mothers, husbands and wives. Learning to work in the home as they grow up will prepare them for what lies ahead.

There was a great article in the June 1973 Ensign titled, Bless Your Children With “Housework Memories” written by Laurie Williams Sowby. In it she says, “As you assign housework to your children, be consistent. A regular work schedule should let the children know when their jobs should be done. (They will be more willing to help if they have a voice in what they must do and when.) We were expected to have our beds made, clothes put away, and rooms straightened before we left for school each morning. The house was picked up each evening before we went to bed. (I like to do that still. It makes the morning start off so much better!) Saturday was a regularly scheduled work time, and other activities weren’t ordinarily allowed until the housework was done. If we had some special Saturday outing planned, we did the work Friday after school. I like to clean on Saturday; it seems to give Sunday more specialness and serenity. Mothers may also find it helpful to have a short middle-of-the-week cleanup one morning or evening, with a special breakfast or dessert session afterward.”

To read the entire article, click here:

<http://www.lds.org/ensign/1973/06/bless-your-children-with-housework-memories?lang=eng&query=household%20chores&cid>

## There Is No Substitute for Work

Building a strong family takes hard work, and part of that work is teaching our children how to work. Though some may see work as something to avoid, the gospel teaches that working for and with our families brings great blessings. God Himself calls His plan for His children “my *work* and my glory” ([Moses 1:39](#)).

To read more about what the Apostles have said about the importance of work, click here:

<http://www.lds.org/family/work>