

TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY

QUESTION: What steps can I take to help my child develop a sense of responsibility?

ANSWER: Children need to learn to be responsible for their own actions, choices, and chores. A child's responsibility should increase with age, maturity level, and physical ability. Young children may be responsible for putting away toys and clothes, while older children should be expected to help with household chores, do homework, and manage their own money. Responsibility is a part of the growth process, and is taught through practice and encouragement.

The following tips might help your child learn about responsibility.

1. Make sure your child understands what is expected.
2. Determine if your child is physically able to complete a task.
3. Divide larger tasks into small segments.
4. Establish a checklist if there are several items to be completed.
5. Establish a reward system for completion of major tasks.
6. Verbally praise your child for completion of even the smallest task.
7. Set reasonable time limits for completion of a task.
8. Be flexible when necessary. Some children do not work well in the "NOW" framework.
9. Work with your child to show him/her the best way to complete a task.
10. Express confidence in your child's abilities.
11. Be firm but fair when establishing guidelines for completing chores or homework.
12. Talk to your child about expectations. Listen to what he/she has to say.

Avoid the establishment of bad habits by teaching children to be responsible. Remember that experience is the best teacher.