Preparing Kids for Adult Responsibilities

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At LOGAN, we believe every child is unique, with their own strengths, interests, and support needs. Because of this, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to teaching household responsibilities. Through collaboration between our Therapy Services and Employment Services teams, we encourage individualized skill development that helps children build independence, confidence, and lifelong work habits.

When is it appropriate for a parent of a child on the autism spectrum to start giving them household chores?
Children can begin participating in household responsibilities as early as the preschool years, but the specific timing depends on their developmental level, communication skills, interests, and readiness rather than their age alone. Even very young children can learn simple tasks such as putting toys away, placing dirty clothes in a hamper, or helping set the table.

The goal is not perfection. Early household responsibilities help children develop self-confidence, independence, responsibility, and a sense of belonging within the family. For children on the autism spectrum, chores can also provide opportunities to practice important skills such as following directions, completing routines, problem-solving, and tolerating changes in expectations.

How should parents determine what chores to give them?
Parents should start by considering their child's individual strengths, interests, and current skill level. A successful chore should be challenging enough to promote growth but achievable enough to allow the child to experience success.

Some considerations include:

- Current abilities and developmental level
- Communication and comprehension skills
- Fine and gross motor abilities
- Attention span
- Sensory preferences and sensitivities
- Areas of interest and motivation
- Physical stamina

For example, a child who enjoys organizing may thrive with sorting laundry or arranging groceries, while a child who enjoys movement may prefer tasks such as carrying items, sweeping, or helping in the yard. At LOGAN, our therapists often recommend breaking larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps and using visual supports, schedules, checklists, or modeling to help children understand expectations and achieve success.

How should parents determine how well they are doing and when to start giving them more responsibility?
Progress should be measured based on the child's personal growth rather than comparison to siblings or peers. Parents can look for signs such as:

- Completing a task with less prompting
- Demonstrating consistency across multiple days or weeks
- Showing confidence and pride in their work
- Remembering tasks independently

- Recovering from mistakes without becoming overly frustrated
- Generalizing skills to new environments or situations

Once a child can perform a task successfully and consistently with minimal support, parents can gradually increase expectations. This might involve adding another step to the task, introducing a new responsibility, or encouraging greater independence in completing the chore. The key is to balance support and challenge, allowing the child to continue building skills without becoming overwhelmed.

How do you help them understand the importance of having a good attitude and taking initiative to solve a problem before someone even asks?

Children learn these skills best when they are modeled consistently by the adults around them. Parents can talk through their own problem-solving process out loud and recognize examples of positive attitudes and initiative when they occur.

For example:

- "I noticed the dog water bowl was empty, and you filled it without being asked. That was very responsible."
- "You spilled some water and grabbed a towel right away. That's great problem-solving."

Instead of focusing solely on task completion, parents can praise the behaviors that employers value, including:

- Persistence
- Flexibility
- Responsibility
- Problem-solving
- Self-advocacy
- Initiative
- Dependability

Many children on the autism spectrum benefit from explicit instruction. Rather than assuming they will infer these expectations, parents can teach them directly through role-playing, social stories, visual reminders, and discussions about real-life scenarios.

How do you help them make the connection that these work habits will help them when they become adults and get a job?

Children often respond best when they can see clear connections between what they are doing today and their future goals. Parents can explain that household chores are not simply about helping around the house; they are opportunities to practice skills that employers look for in every workplace.

For example:

- Making the bed teaches attention to detail.
- Cleaning up after a project teaches responsibility.
- Following a chore checklist teaches task completion.
- Completing chores without reminders demonstrates independence.
- Noticing and solving problems shows initiative.
- Working through challenges builds resilience.

At LOGAN, our Employment Services and Therapy Services teams work together to help individuals understand how everyday life skills translate into employment success. Whether a person ultimately works in an office, a retail setting, manufacturing, food service, or another environment, employers consistently value reliability, responsibility, problem-solving, and the ability to complete tasks independently.

By teaching household responsibilities in a supportive, individualized manner, parents are helping their children develop the foundational skills needed for greater independence, meaningful community participation, and future employment success. Every small step toward responsibility today can become an important building block for adulthood tomorrow.