

# Can you children give me a hand?

**Until recently, children's help around the house was essential** – families were bigger and there was little technology to lighten the load.

Even though we live in a more automated age than our grandparents our lives are just as busy. The need for children to pitch in and help is just as pertinent today.

The expectation that children should help at home sends a powerful message that their contribution is valued. Children learn to be contributors rather than mere takers within their social groups.

Helping at home is an opportunity for children to make a contribution to the family, rather than their moneybox so the following ideas may help you develop the helping habit in children.

- 1. Start early.** When you consistently expect children to help from a young age their contribution not only becomes a habit, but valued by the whole family.
- 2. Make the help real, not phony.** Give them real tasks such emptying dishwashers, collecting mail and cooking meals rather than time-fillers. (Visit [WWW.Parentingideas.com](http://WWW.Parentingideas.com).)

au for a list of jobs suitable for each age group.)

- 3. Don't do the jobs ('help') for them.** Sometimes it is easier for parents to do the jobs themselves, but this encourages children to leave it up to their parents.
- 4. Use 'grandma's principle' to keep kids on task.** My grandma used to put things in the right order so I wasn't allowed to watch television until the table was cleared after a meal, or play outside until homework was finished.
- 5. Use the term 'help', not 'chores'.** Image is everything. The terms 'job' and 'chore' sound like hard work and can be extremely off-putting.

The notion of helping fits the philosophy that a central task of parenting is to promote a sense of generosity and community-mindedness in children. As most research indicates, these core values are primarily learned at home.



## Quick Parenting Quiz

- 1. According to a recent US study the main wish by children for their working mothers is that they:**
  - a) Earn more money
  - b) Be less stressed by work
  - c) Be less tired due to work
  - d) Spend more time with them
- 2. According to a variety of studies both in the US and Australia men spend more time interacting with their children than twenty years ago?**

True or false

Answers: 1a) 2 true

## Vitamins for parents

At different ages parents can focus on:

- 1. Helping together with pre school children**
- 2. Teaching primary aged children the right way to help and**
- 3. Delegating helping tasks to teenagers. Real delegation means allowing them to work out how a job should be done.**

## Bright idea



### Place important help on a roster.

Allocate help, with children's assistance, then place their names on a roster next to the tasks. You can use symbols rather than words for pre readers. When children complete a task they can place a sticker on the matching symbol on the roster. This serves as a record of their contribution. It is a good idea to change the roster frequently so the less appealing tasks are shared.

## Wise & Witty Words

"You don't need a parent, you need a guard."

*Exasperated parent to a child*

"Each interaction with our children provides an educational opportunity to help weave a strong and resilient personal fabric."

*Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein*