

What New Life Skills Will Your Kids Learn This Summer?

by Kathy Slattengren

We have until our children are about 18 years old to teach them all the basic skills they'll need to live on their own. Although it sounds like a lot of time, it goes by amazingly fast. Summertime can provide a little more free time for teaching our kids something new.

Children often enjoy helping out in the kitchen. Learning to plan and make a meal is a fundamental skill. Is your child ready to take responsibility for a family meal or part of a meal? Young children may be able to make a simple breakfast (with your help!) and teenagers can typically handle cooking a dinner.

While it may be easier for you to do the cooking yourself, teaching your kids these skills will eventually pay off. When children help with a meal, they also can begin to appreciate all the steps that are involved:

- Picking out the recipes to make
- Going to the grocery store to buy the ingredients
- Putting the groceries away
- Figuring out what to prepare at what time so that the food is done at about the same time
- Following the recipe and preparing the food
- Setting the table
- Serving the food



There is a tricky balance for parents between providing help and accidentally taking over what children are really capable of doing themselves. One way to allow your children more control is to tell them you are happy to help if they request your help with something. Then stay out of the way until they ask for your help (but do stay close by in case of an emergency like the oven fire we experienced when our daughter was making a very cheesy pizza!).

Through chores children learn that they are important contributing members of the family. By the time children are about 4-years-old, they are ready to be responsible for some household chores. While it may take more time to teach them how to do a chore than to simply do it yourself, your effort will pay off when they are able to do it on their own.

Last summer our then 12-year-old son learned to pressure wash the deck. He was happy to take on this new task especially since it involved getting wet and getting paid! My husband taught him how to use the pressure washer including all the safety information. It took many hours to get the job done but he stuck with it and we enjoyed a clean deck!

Although we do not pay our children for their daily chores, we do pay them for certain extra chores. It's a great way for work to get done and for our children to earn money for the special things they would like.

One mom told me she is teaching her 5-year-old twins how to do the laundry. Although she still needs to provide some guidance, she remarked that the boys are so proud they know what buttons to push and how to do a load of laundry! Mastering new household skills builds self-confidence in children and starts building appreciation for what needs to be done to keep the household running.

What will your children learn this summer?

Kathy Slattengren is a noted parenting speaker, trainer and founder of Priceless Parenting. [Priceless Parenting](#) provides [online parenting classes](#) which teach effective discipline techniques for positively dealing with misbehavior.

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