

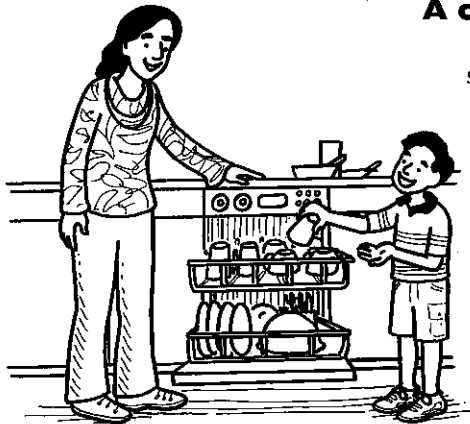
Responsibility Rocks!

Children learn letters, numbers, shapes, and more in hands-on ways. Why not learn responsibility that way, too? From doing chores to keeping promises and owning up to mistakes, here are ways your youngster can become more responsible at home and in school.



Portrait of responsibility

Suggest that your child draw a self-portrait and label parts with her responsibilities. She could write “Listening to my teacher” beside an ear and “Walking my little brother to school safely” near her feet. Draw one of your own, and let her compare the two—she’ll see that you each have different responsibilities.



A chore expert

Give your youngster regular household chores—and allow him to take the lead. Feeling like an expert can motivate him to get the job done and take pride in his work. For instance, he could come

up with a better way to load the dishwasher and then teach everyone his method. Or he might think of a new system for sorting laundry. *Idea:* When you ask about his day at school, have him tell you about classroom jobs he does, like passing out papers or being the line leader.

Responsible for learning

Being a student is your child’s job—and she’s the one in charge of that job! Encourage her to come up with a good system for remembering her responsibilities, such as using a planner or keeping a checklist on her desk. Tasks could include writing down homework assignments, completing assigned reading, studying for tests, being prepared for class discussions, and turning in finished work.

Taking care of property

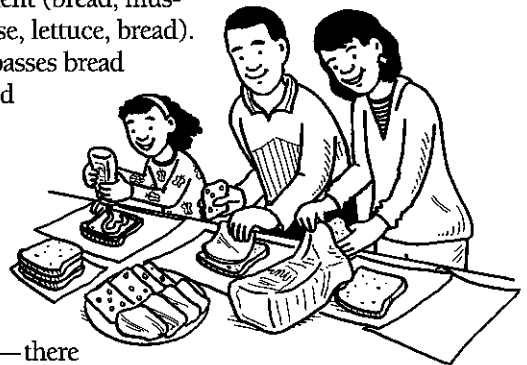
Let your youngster post signs around the house encouraging family members to be responsible for shared property. He could write and illustrate each one. A sign near art supplies might read “Put caps back on markers and glue sticks so they don’t dry out.” And a sign in the bathroom may say “Wipe up spilled water so no one slips.”

Tip: If you take on an extra responsibility (feeding a vacationing neighbor’s cats, babysitting your cousin’s toddler), invite your youngster to help you so he gets a taste of new responsibilities.

Assembly-line fun

In factories, each assembly-line worker depends on everyone before her to do her own part of the job. Show your youngster how this works by trying out an assembly line at home. You might make sandwiches for a picnic. Assign each person an ingredient (bread, mustard, turkey, cheese, lettuce, bread).

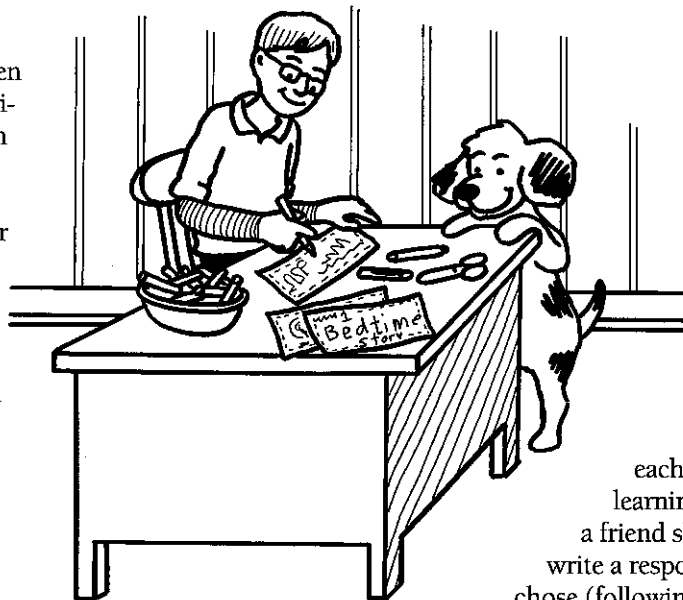
The first person passes bread down the line, and everyone adds their ingredients in order. Ask your child what would happen if the person in charge of bread didn’t do her job—there would be no sandwiches!



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“I promise” coupons

Explain to your child that when he makes a promise, he’s responsible for keeping it. Encourage him to be a promise keeper with this idea. Let him design coupons promising to do special things for family members. A coupon for his little sister might say “I promise to read you a bedtime story this weekend,” and one for you could read “I promise to clean out the back of the van before our trip.”



Tip: When possible, use words like *capable* and *dependable* while talking to or about your child. You could say, “I can always depend on you to...” or “Julie is very capable of...”

Financially savvy

Learning to spend and save responsibly begins early. Your youngster will need to weigh needs and wants, set priorities, and be patient. If you give her an allowance, or if she receives money for gifts or odd jobs, suggest that she set aside a portion to save. *Idea:* Take a field trip to the bank to open her own savings account.

A dose of accountability

Everyone makes mistakes, but it’s important to take responsibility for them. If your child does something he’s not supposed to, ask how he will be accountable for his actions. Say he misses the bus and you have to drive him to school. Perhaps he can do a chore that you normally do to make up for the time you spent driving. Or if he doesn’t finish his work in class, he may need to complete it at home instead of playing with friends.

Earning privileges

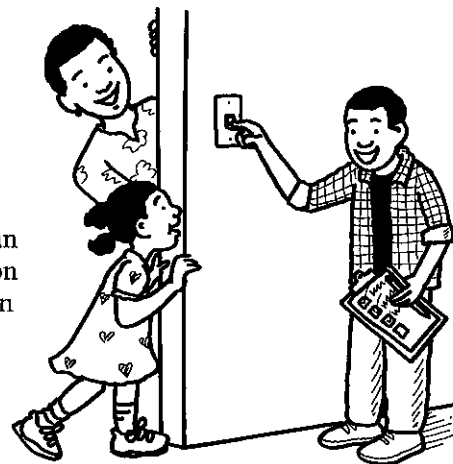
With privileges come responsibilities. This game shows your youngster how they’re related. Get a dozen index cards, and give half to her. Ask her to write a privilege she enjoys on



each card, such as deciding which learning centers to use in class or having a friend sleep over. On each of your cards, write a responsibility to match a privilege she chose (following classroom rules, going to bed on time). Put the cards facedown in rows, and take turns flipping over two cards and reading them. If the privilege matches the responsibility, keep the pair. If not, return them to their spots. Collect the most matches to win.

Our earth is for everyone

Your child isn’t too young to start taking responsibility for the planet! Encourage him to make an events calendar of earth-friendly activities. He might pencil in an Earth Day celebration that he read about on a flyer. Or he could plan a household “energy checkup” where family members brainstorm ways to use less power. He’ll feel proud to check off each item that he accomplishes.



Responsible on the Internet

Kids in today’s world must learn to behave responsibly online. Consider creating a contract with your child that outlines responsible online behavior. Include guidelines like telling you about any inappropriate messages or posts she receives, keeping personal information private (name, age, school), and visiting only websites you have approved. You should both sign the contract, and hang it by the computer.