

How chores can help you get a job

Develop life and employment skills through chores and responsibilities at home

Why chores?

Research shows that chores have many benefits for youth. Chores build a sense of responsibility, independence, and self-confidence. Chores are associated with greater connection with others which can lead to greater happiness. They can also help youth build the necessary life skills to succeed in adulthood.

Benefits of chores for youth with disabilities

- **Learn self-reflection and self-advocacy.** Chores provide opportunities to try new things and explore interests. Chores can help us understand what work-like activities we might like or not like. Chores are also a useful way to start thinking about how we work and learn best so we can share this information with future employers.
- **Skill building.** Chores help youth learn and practice future workplace skills such as time management, team work, work ethic; and practical life skills, such as cooking, cleaning, gardening, and self-care.
- **Feel good and connected to their families and communities.** Chores provide opportunities for youth to help others. Click [here](#) to listen to a lived experience perspective.
- **Nurture independence and a greater sense of self-worth.** Youth with disabilities often miss valuable opportunities to consider what might be possible for their future. By demonstrating to themselves and others what they can do, rather than what they cannot do, youth with disabilities can experience success and begin to envision a positive future for themselves.
- **Build resiliency.** Nobody is great at trying something new their first time. By providing the right level of challenge, chores give youth the opportunity to practice how to ask for help and “push through” when tasks are difficult.

Benefits of chores for parents and caregivers

- **Shared workload.** Your youth can help! Let them. All family members can have a role in caring for the home.
- **A more harmonious family.** The family will be more harmonious if everyone contributes and the bulk of the chores does not fall on certain individuals.
- **Pass on family values, traditions, culture, and religion.** Teaching chores gives you a chance to connect with your youth and teach them your values, work ethic and essential life skills like how to take care of themselves, their belongings, and a home. It's also an opportunity to pass on family traditions and culture. For example, during holidays youth can help prepare traditional holiday food.

How to motivate your youth to do chores

- **Consider a reward system:** Choose a reward that works for your family and that is important to your youth. Examples of rewards:
 - More video game or screen time
 - Choosing the movie for family movie night
 - An allowance (Try [MyDoh](#), a website that helps caregivers teach their kids about money management)
- **Let your youth choose the chore.** Offer a list of chores and let your youth decide which chores they will do. Letting them choose will provide an opportunity to be independent.
- **Use a progress chart.** Click [here](#) to find helpful tips on how to create a progress chart, sometimes also called a token economy.
- **Base chores around your youth's interests and strengths.**
- **Let your youth know that being part of a family means helping with the household chores.** Running a household requires a team effort, and they are part of the team.
- **Brainstorm ways to make chores fun.** Making chores fun can build positive associations with chores. Examples of how to make chores fun include:
 - Listening to music, an audiobook or a funny podcast while doing the dishes
 - Watching a favourite television show while folding the laundry
 - Make it a game or family competition!

How to choose appropriate chores for your youth

Find the just-right fit. You know your youth best, their strengths and challenges. Try to find the right balance between chores that highlight their strengths and skills but also challenge them to try new things.

- **Start by thinking about the chores that are most meaningful to you and your family,** and which chores need to be prioritized. You can also include daily self-care activities if your youth are still learning these skills, such as teeth-brushing, making the bed, or directing a support worker on self-care. ***Having trouble thinking of chores?*** Click [here](#) for some ideas.
- **Build on interests, skills, and abilities your youth already possesses.** For example, if your youth is already able to make their own lunch, the next step could be for them to cut the vegetables for dinner. Eventually, they have a set responsibility, such as preparing the salad for each meal.
- **Find the just-right challenge.** Consider ways of modifying the chore so that your youth will be successful but also challenged enough to stay engaged.
 - Consider your youth's age and developmental level.
 - Ask your youth's health team for recommendations about adaptive equipment that could help enable your youth to participate. For example, a long-handed reacher can help while doing chores.
- **Think about the safety and complexity of the chore.**
 - Does the chore require upper body strength, balance, or fine motor skills?
 - Does the chore require the youth to follow multiple steps at once?
 - If the chore is too complex or requires a great degree of skill or ability that your youth does not yet possess, think about ways to modify, or try a simpler chore.

- **Think about the expectations of the chore.** Set your youth up for success by explaining the expectations of each chore. Certain chores may need to be completed at certain times of the day or days of the week (e.g. feeding the dog needs to be done every day by 9 am).

Be creative. There are opportunities for independence in all aspects of chores and responsibilities. For youth with disabilities, finding the right chore for them might take some creative thinking.

- **Doing only one part of a chore** instead of the entire chore. For example, sorting the laundry, but not folding the laundry.
- **Thinking broadly about what responsibilities exist in your household.** For example, maybe your youth is excellent at using the computer and can create and manage family emails, or the family budget using an Excel spreadsheet.

Steps for teaching a new chore.

Step 1: Describe the chore. Use language or examples that your youth will understand.

Step 2: Provide your youth with a list of instructions or a checklist, which can be written, in audio or video format, photos or pictures. Some instructions can include multiple strategies (e.g. written with pictures) depending on the learning needs of your youth. Checklists can also help your youth learn to organize tasks independently and give them a sense of accomplishment as they check off "done" for each task! Please see an example of a visual checklist below of if you **want help creating visual supports for your youth.** Follow this link to the [ConnectAbility.ca visuals engine](https://connectability.ca/visuals-engine).



Step 3: Demonstrate the chore and practice it with your youth as many times as needed before they do it independently. You may want to break the chore down into manageable steps and teach each step separately before putting all the steps of the chore together.

Step 4: Provide prompts or cues as needed. Prompts or cues are actions or words that caregivers can use when helping to teach a new task. Simple, one-word prompts, cuing with one gesture, or teaching self-initiated cues are best. Examples of prompts or cues include:

- Pointing to a visual schedule
- Setting a timer to go off every 10 minutes to remind your youth to stay on task.
- Placing visual cues in the environment to remind the youth what step comes next.
- You may want to gradually stop prompting and cueing as your youth becomes more independent in their chore. For example, start by guiding your youth with verbal prompts while pointing to the task on the checklist. Next time they need a cue, you can simply point to the checklist. Eventually, they will learn to look at the checklist on their own.

Step 5: Follow up and give feedback. Giving and receiving feedback are both important skills to learn for future employment. Family members who are used to doing this task can give feedback to the youth on what was done well and how to improve for next time. The youth can also think about how they did the chore and if they found a way to make it better!

For parents and caregivers giving feedback: In the beginning when your youth is learning, lots of positive feedback will help them stay motivated. As they get more comfortable with doing chores, feedback can become more specific. For example, you can share about how to improve the quality or quantity of their chore, which will teach them what is expected and to take pride in their work.

For youth receiving feedback: Remember that you are doing an important job that helps you and your family, so doing your chore well matters. When you get feedback on how to improve, try to use that feedback the next time you do your chore.

Other considerations

- **Make chores apart of the regular home routine.**
- **Schedule breaks and set timeframes** for when you want the chores to be completed.
- **Be prepared for setbacks and don't give up!** Roadblocks are expected when learning new routines. It is best to keep the routine of chores going. You can try switching to a new chore or offering new rewards to help keep your youth interested and motivated.
- **Remember to celebrate the accomplishments!** Use lots of praise, especially when your youth are learning a new chore. Evidence shows that using positive reinforcement to learn a new behaviour leads to more enduring and positive change. Go to the [ConnectAbility.ca](https://connectability.ca) website to learn more about using positive reinforcement.

Still need more support getting started? Please follow this link to the [Holland Bloorview Life Skills programs](#).