



# Kids in the Kitchen

**Kids and cooking go hand in hand.** The kitchen is a great place to teach children the importance of teamwork, patience and how to follow directions. This is also a time to introduce kids to new foods and help them appreciate all the components of making a family meal. There are varying ability levels in a typical family; everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses that can improve by spending time in the kitchen. Sometimes it is hard to know what kitchen jobs can be delegated to children in certain age groups. The following are some common kitchen tasks that can be performed by children in different age groups:

## Three Year Olds

At the age of three, kids are excited to help out in the kitchen. They are developing fine motor skills that can be challenged by completing simple tasks like washing fruits and vegetables. Prepare a produce washing station for the kids at the sink with a colander, clean scrubbing pad and plenty of paper towels. This is a great time to explain how fruits and vegetables grow and how cleaning off the dirt is important. After the vegetables are washed, pat them dry with paper towels and break down the station. This is a great way to illustrate how important it is to clean up after a task. Other simple tasks a three-year old can do are tearing lettuce for salads, pouring pre-measured liquids and stirring ingredients in a bowl.

## Four to Five Year Olds

Four-year olds can complete tasks that require more feats of strength. Delegating the tasks of greasing pans, opening packages or mashing soft fruits like bananas are jobs they can manage. Five-year olds are learning about using numbers for practical usages like counting animals in a book, reading clocks or measuring liquids. Have the five year old read and measure the amounts of liquids they need and let

them pour them into the bowl. They can also cut soft foods with a blunt knife, snip herbs with dull scissors and also help set the table.

### **Six to Eight Year Olds**

Between the ages of six and eight, children have a firm grasp on identifying different parts of a meal; beverages, soup, salads, entrees, vegetables and desserts. Put all of this knowledge to use by letting them make the menu for the meal. Start off by making a list of possible recipes and categorizing them into various parts of the meal. Have the child select foods they think go best together. This is a good way to begin a conversation about creating balanced meals. Other jobs that can be delegated to children are rolling and shaping cookies, beating ingredients with a whisk and making simple recipes such as salad dressing on their own.

### **Nine to Twelve Year Olds**

This advanced age group can handle risky tasks with supervision such as using can openers, operating the microwave, ovens and shredding cheese and vegetables. Modeling proper usage of equipment is important; young children watch everything you do so always use safer kitchen practices. Take time to talk about sanitation in the kitchen; teach them how to clean up after preparing raw meat, using clean plates for cooked food not plates that have been touched by raw products, and how to properly clean a sharp knife. The responsibilities that you choose to give your children during this age span will also be based on their maturity and eagerness to participate in kitchen activities. Some children find spending time in the kitchen fascinating and some do not. Exposing children to different responsibilities in the kitchen lets them decide what they enjoy. By fostering an environment of learning and creativity in the kitchen, you are teaching them invaluable life skills.

Even if school is out of session, there are still valuable lessons to be learned. Creating memorable learning experiences in the kitchen are great ways to connect with your kids and teach them valuable life principals.

## Children and Household Chores

In the kitchen is not the only place where kids can pitch in. Get your children involved in all areas of the running a family household. Below are some ideas for age appropriate chores.

### **3-4 YEAR OLDS CAN:**

- Pick up Toys
- Fold Dishtowels and Washcloths
- Match Socks
- Put small items in the garbage
- Give food to pets
- Water indoor plants

### **5-6 YEAR OLDS CAN ALSO:**

- Answer the telephone
- Sweep a deck/patio/porch
- Wipe the bathroom sink
- Put forks and spoons away
- Put their own clothes in the drawer
- Sort laundry into color piles
- Use a hand-held vacuum

### **7-9 YEAR OLDS CAN ALSO:**

- Take out Garbage
- Set the table
- Clear the table
- Vacuum an area rug
- Clean the inside of the car
- Empty the dishwasher
- Put away clean dry dishes
- Water the garden

### **10-12 YEAR OLDS CAN ALSO:**

- Clean mirrors
- Clean kitchen counters & sink
- Fold and put away laundry
- Put away groceries
- Pack their own lunch
- Light yard work
- Load the dishwasher

### **13-14 YEAR OLDS CAN ALSO:**

- Clean the bathroom
- Change bed sheets
- Mow the lawn
- Wash dishes by hand
- Wash the car
- Do laundry
- Shovel snow

### **15 YEARS AND UP CAN ALSO:**

- Use a leaf blower
- Use a snow blower
- Clean the refrigerator
- Reorganize storage areas
- Make Dinner

\* The ages listed are approximate, and capabilities will vary depending on the individual child.



# Chore Chart

Week of

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

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	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

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