



ZERO TO THREE  
Early connections last a lifetime



# Raising Little Helpers:

## Building Responsibility in the Preschool Years

Your child is only three or four years old, so it might seem too early to think about chores. But research shows this is a great time to start.

### Why it matters

When young children take on small tasks, something important happens. They start to build skills that help them focus, plan, and follow through. These skills grow quickly between the ages of 3 and 5. **Daily tasks at home are one of the best ways to help them grow.**

Chores also help children feel able to do things on their own. Studies show this feeling is a key part of staying motivated through life. When your child puts away their shoes or helps set the table, they are doing more than finishing a task. They are learning that they matter and that what they do counts.

### What this looks like for preschoolers

The brains of children this age are still learning to follow directions with several steps. Keep tasks simple. Do them the same way each day. Make them part of family life.

Here are some tasks that work well at this age:

- » Putting dirty clothes in a hamper
- » Hanging up their coat
- » Helping carry groceries inside
- » Matching socks or putting clothes in drawers
- » Cleaning up their toys
- » Setting the table for dinner
- » Wiping up a spill they made
- » Helping rake leaves or water plants
- » Bringing cookies to a neighbor



Daily routines help a lot. When a task happens the same way each day, children need fewer reminders. Over time, it becomes a natural part of who they are.

## What to expect

Your child will need reminders. That is completely normal. They will also do tasks in their own way. Socks may not always match. They may forget to put out a fork. **Be patient with these small mistakes.** Remember, they are still learning. Try to keep chores fun by framing them as special ways your child helps the family.

## How to help without taking over

It's great when you stay close without jumping in too fast. Offer just enough help for your child to succeed. Then slowly step back as they gain more skill.

Describe what you notice instead of just saying "good job." Try saying something like, "You put all the blocks away all by yourself!" This kind of praise helps children link their effort to the result, which builds lasting pride.

Building responsibility is about more than just getting chores done. It helps children feel like helpful members of the family. That feeling stays with them for life.

## Have more questions?

Talk to your child's healthcare provider or one of the professionals supporting your family.

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