

# INDEPENDENCE

All parents should have the notion of redundancy on their minds when they raise their children

The task of child-rearing is to raise responsible, independent children who are capable physically and emotionally of standing on their own two feet as adults. However, parents shouldn't wait until children are ready to leave home before they give them responsibility.

Training for independence should start from toddlerhood and continue into the teenage years. Encouraging independence in children is not just good training for adulthood. It is one of the best ways to promote self-confidence. When we teach children to do jobs for themselves we demonstrate our faith in them and send a powerful message that they are capable. Our actions definitely speak louder than our words.

## FOLLOWING ARE SOME IDEAS TO HELP YOU DEVELOP INDEPENDENCE IN YOUR CHILDREN, REGARDLESS OF THEIR AGE:

**1. Expect children to do routine household and family activities** - e.g. tidying bedrooms before school, clearing away dishes, preparing after-school snacks.

**2. Make it easy for children to be independent.** Chunk complex activities down to bite-size chunks. For instance, very young children can learn to empty the dishwasher by doing the knives and forks first. They can make their beds by smoothing the doona and arranging their teddies and

moving on from there.

**3. Teach children the skills of independence.** Teaching and training needs to be part of the every day repertoire of a parent. This means we need to add a little extra time to many of our interactions so we can help children acquire many of the basic skills of living, whether it is a young child learning to do up his or her shoelaces or a teenager learning how to fill out his or her tax form. When we are busy it is often easier to do things ourselves.

**4. "Can my child do this?"** Be alert to children's readiness and willingness to do things for themselves then consider letting your child take over. Ask yourself: 'Is my child capable of doing ...?' Alternatively, ask yourself from time to time: 'What am I doing for my child that they can do for themselves?'

## FIVE TASKS CHILDREN CAN DO

### HERE ARE FIVE TASKS THAT YOU CAN BE AIMING FOR CHILDREN TO TAKE

### RESPONSIBILITY FOR:

**1. Getting themselves out of bed:** When children can tell the time teach them how to use an alarm clock so they can get themselves up and regulate their own morning routine.

**2. Preparing their own healthy snacks and meals:** Encourage them to prepare their own breakfast and put their own lunch in the school bag.

**3. Packing and unpacking their own schoolbags:** They may need to be reminded but packing and unpacking schoolbags is a child's job.

**4. Washing their own clothes:** Show older children how to operate the washing machine and microwave.

**5. Cooking a family meal:** As a benchmark ten years olds have the capability to cook an evening meal for the family.



Parenting *ideas*  
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