



Parenting the Blended Family: Allocating Chores and Responsibilities

By Kelly Nault

In many households, it can be quite a challenge figuring out who's in charge of which chores and which responsibilities. This is especially true for blended families.

If not handled properly, favoritism (or perceived favoritism) can rear its ugly head in the chore realm. And the last thing parents want to hear from their kids is that their new siblings are getting "special treatment" while *they* do all the work.

To avoid the Cinderella syndrome that often accompanies the process of assigning chores and responsibilities for blended families, it helps to keep a few basics in mind—basics about chores and basics about your kids.

Parenting Secret: Kids Like Chores

Believe it or not, deep down (sometimes *very* deep down), kids like chores. "Yeah, right," you might be thinking, "not our kids!" But the fact remains: kids have an inherent interest in contributing to others and helping out.

Think about it. As toddlers, children think chores are an exciting adventure. The vacuum is awe-inspiring, dishwashing is as thrilling as a bath, and the washing machine is a great appliance they can hardly wait to discover.

Unfortunately, parents often squelch this natural affinity toward chores. When it comes to chores, the two main messages many moms (and dads) send their kids are:

- "Chores are not fun."
- "The household does not need your help."

No wonder kids dislike chores and responsibilities!

When parenting within a blended family, the negative effects of such chore messages can be especially damaging. You certainly do not want your new son or daughter feeling that their new home does not need them!

It's crucial to create a parenting environment in which your children—all of them—feel needed,

wanted, and appreciated. A child who believes their household needs them knows that they belong—knows that they are accepted.

Figuring Out Chores and Responsibilities for Blended Families

Most children today think the best way they can help out around the house is by getting out of the way. As I discuss on page 86 of my parenting book *When You're About To Go Off The Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You*, the “Go and play” attitude does not establish that vital sense of family connectedness nor does it establish the sense of contribution that is essential to your child’s future well-being.

To create this sense of belonging, include your children in household chores and responsibilities. For blended families, this can require additional time, effort and patience as you reallocate certain household tasks, but the investment is well worth it.

The next time you want to snatch the vacuum cleaner from your son because he’s not doing it right or take over on dishwashing because your daughter has chipped yet another glass, think twice.

Remember that your children gain a great sense of accomplishment in helping out around the house. Encourage them for a job well done. Especially encourage them when the job isn’t done to perfection by pointing out what they did right and gently telling them how they can improve.

Kelly Nault, MA corporate spokesperson and award winning parenting author of *When You're About To Go Off The Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You* inspires moms to put themselves first—for the sake of their children. She shares time-tested tools that motivate children to want to be well behaved, responsible and happy! Sign up for her free online parenting course at www.UltimateParenting.com.

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