

FACT SHEET:



ABIOS

Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service

Category:

Life After ABI

Parenting

Audience:

Person with an ABI

**For more information
contact the Acquired Brain
Injury Outreach Service
(ABIOS)**

PH: (07) 3176 9506

Email: abios@health.qld.gov.au

Address: PO Box 6053, Buranda 4102

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Encouraging START behaviours: Involving children in jobs and chores

Introduction

Encouraging children to complete jobs and chores gives them a chance to learn about working in a team. This team can be the family 'team', or in later life, it will be a 'work' team. It is also about learning that life is a balance of both jobs as well as fun.



Where to Start

- List the chores your child is capable of doing considering their developmental stage. Refer to 'Ideas for Chores' chart for some ideas.
- Explain and show them what you expect them to do.
- Show your appreciation for their help. Let them know that their contribution to the family is valued.
- Identify if you want to reward your child and in what way. This may be as varied as you like. It can include things like
 - stickers
 - a fun game together (eg playing a game of tennis or a board game)
 - going on an outing together
 - hiring a DVD at the end of the week
 - pocket money.
- Discuss the rewards with your child. If they are old enough they can talk with you about it.

Children aged between 2 to 6 years:

- Family rules are important to introduce to children in this age range.
- You can expect your child to help with chores. For example a 2 year old can give you pegs while you are putting clothes on the line. They may help by putting things on the table when you are setting it. Another example is together you may pick up the toys they have been playing with.



- Children in this age range have little concentration. They are only able to attend to a task briefly. They have limited capacity to start tasks on their own or to complete a task by themselves.

Children between the ages of 6 to 8 years of age:

- Children in this age range can be encouraged to complete a task on their own.
- Children in this age range may be able to complete a small list (3 to 5) of chores daily. This could include things like setting and clearing the dinner table, packing and unpacking their own school bag, and making their own bed.



- A few chores can be listed on a chart and a sticker given for each task completed.
- Make sure you use plenty of praise.
- You may have to use additional rewards (an allowance, or points) if the chart and praise is not enough.

Older Children






- As children get older they become more independent in tasks and you can move to more daily house-holds tasks. This could include things like putting the garbage out, packing and unpacking the dishwasher, and dusting.
- Place the more difficult or unpleasant jobs on a roster so they rotate frequently.
- Make sure the jobs are completed before mealtimes or pleasant activities.
- You shouldn't expect your children to work independently all the time. Sometimes they will need supervision and sometimes you can lend a hand to help make it more fun and avoid the grind of some chores.
- Whenever possible try to give the children tasks they will enjoy.
- Try to avoid a nagging or critical tone.

With regular chores you can expect to use the following start behaviour tactics:

- **Praise** provides encouragement and increases the chance of that behaviour occurring again.
- **Kitchen timer:** You can make a game using the kitchen timer. Set the timer and say to your child, "I bet you get pick up those 3 things and put them away before the timer goes off in 10 minutes".
- **The Docking System:** This system is for children who are at middle to upper primary school and are receiving an allowance. One idea is for half the allowance to be for doing jobs around the house and the other half for being a part of the family. It doesn't have to be a large amount. If the child does the job than he gets a financial reward. If he doesn't, you do the job and take the money.
- **Using Charts:** When using a chart, reinforcement comes from three things: the chart itself, praise from the parent, and the satisfaction of doing a good job. If these three things don't work on their own then you may need to use a reward. This means that the child is going to earn something for completing the task. This reward has nothing to do with the task. For smaller children use relatively small things that can be dished out frequently and in little pieces. With older kids, larger rewards that take longer to earn can become more feasible. The rewards can include: reading a book together, staying up an extra 10 minutes at night, or choosing a favourite meal.



Ideas for Chores:

| Age Range | Chores |
|-------------------|---|
| From 2 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping to pack away toys • Handing pegs to parent while they are hanging out clothes • Help prepare the table for dinner • Put dirty clothes in the dirty clothes basket • Bagging leaves with a parent • Helping in the garden • Helping to care for a pet (this depend on the pet's temperament)  |
| From 4 or 5 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help make bed • Help tidy room • Help unpack the shopping • Sort out clothes into who owns what • Help at the supermarket by locating items  |
| From 6 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the table for dinner • Put the rubbish out • Pack/ unpack the dishwasher • Helping with the dishes  |
| From 7 to 9 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raking leaves • Helping at the supermarket by adding up costs on a calculator • Helping to write a shopping list and put items in appropriate groups • Dusting • Putting washing in the basket • Making their beds • Reading to younger siblings  |
| From 9 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorting the laundry, and then folding it after it's washed and dried • Helping to plan, prepare, and clean up after meals • Washing the car • Vacuuming • Sweeping  |

