

CHORES AND TASKS FOR EVERY AGE AND STAGE

HOW CAN I HELP?

AGE GROUP	MEALTIME TASKS	INNOVATIVE TASKS	WHY IT HELPS
Toddlers (1-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand out napkins Place spoons and cups Put food scraps in the trash 	<p> Mealtime Music Helper: Press play on a short dinner-time song to signal "time to eat"</p> <p> Tiny Table Setter: Let them "decorate" their spot (stickers on a placemat, picking a special napkin)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fine Motor Skills: Improving grasping and hand-eye coordination (CDC, AAP) Cognitive: Following simple one-step instructions (NIH) Social/Emotional: Beginning independence and desire to help
Pre-schooler (4-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set plates at the table Carry small bowls of food (with supervision) Wipe the table after meals 	<p> Dinner Theater Assistant: Let them announce, "Dinner is ready!" like a host</p> <p> Crumb Catcher: Give them a small handheld broom to sweep crumbs post-meal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fine Motor: Better control of hands and ability to carry objects (AAP) Cognitive: Can follow two-step instructions (NIH) Social: Increased interest in group participation (CDC)
Young Kids (6-7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help clear plates Pour drinks into cups Stir or mix ingredients (with supervision) 	<p> Tabletime Timer Keeper: In charge of flipping a sand timer for focused mealtime engagement</p> <p> Plating Assistant: Arranges food on plates in a fun way (smiley faces with veggies, stacking pancakes, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motor Skills: More precise hand-eye coordination for pouring/stirring (AAP) Cognitive: Can sequence tasks (e.g., clear, rinse, stack dishes) (CDC) Social: Enjoys responsibility and rule-following (NIH)
Older Kids (8-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in meal prep (washing veggies, measuring ingredients) Load & unload the dishwasher Help serve family meals 	<p> "Around the World" Menu Planner: Research and pick one meal per week from a different culture</p> <p> Food Detective: Looks up 1-2 fun facts about an ingredient used in dinner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Functioning: Can follow multi-step processes (NIH) Cognitive: Can measure, follow basic recipes (AAP) Social: Increased confidence in independent tasks (CDC)
Teens (13+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan & cook one meal per week Set the full table, including utensils & drinks Help with cleanup & food storage 	<p> Budget Boss: Given a small budget to shop for a meal they plan</p> <p> Dinner DJ: Picks background music for family meals (theme nights, jazz, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Functioning: Can manage time and meal planning (NIH) Cognitive: Understands nutrition and food preparation (AAP) Social: Values autonomy and responsibility (CDC)