Getting Kids to Help: Dishes

Cleaning up after eating is an important life skill! It can also lead to fun teachable moments in your home. Use this guide for making quick work of post-meal cleanup.

**Option 1:** Have each child choose one night each week to take care of the dishes.

**Option 2:** Try the team approach, so kids can work together to "divide and conquer."

**Doing the dishes** means:
- Clearing the table
- Scraping the dishes
- Loading the dishwasher
- Washing/drying (for hand-washed items)

**Safety Tip**

Younger children can be in charge of non-breakable items and utensils (minus the sharp knives!)

**Teach children** what items:
- Get thrown away
- Go in the compost bin (consider starting a compost pile if you don’t already have one)
- Can — and can’t— go into a garbage disposal, if you have one

**Do a Dishwasher "Demo."**

Show kids how to load the dishwasher properly, such as:
- Lining up like items to maximize space and efficiency
- Putting plastic containers and cups go on the top
- Loading sharp knives facing downward
- Reading the label on dishwashing detergent packages
- Adding dishwashing detergent (for older children only)

**JUST FOR FUN**

... each night, have a different family member choose "music to do the dishes by." Dancing is allowed ... but only as long as it’s done safely, far away from breakable dishes and sharp utensils!