

Teaching children to pick up toys

by Glenda Wentworth, CSU Extension, Eagle County

One of the most challenging tasks that parents often face is teaching children to pick up their toys. Sometimes it seems that young children have a million toys scattered all over. Parents constantly remind their children to pick up their toys. However, there probably will be some resistance by the children to clean up toys.

First of all, if everything has a place, picking up is much easier. When there is a separate box for blocks, a container for crayons, a basket for stuffed animals, etc this helps children develop a sense of order and makes the picking up process go smoother.

Parents should get their child's attention before giving a warning or directions. Avoid yelling directions from across the room or from another room. Get close to them, kneel down to their level, and make eye contact. Speak in a normal or soft voice and state your directions.

Always give a five minute warning that it is "Pick up time." Remember young children have a hard time transitioning from one activity to another. Say, "In five minutes we will be picking up our toys." Then a few



minutes later remind them again. When it is time to pick up, sing a song about cleaning up toys.

State clearly your directions on what you want your child to do. Do not phrase directions as questions (for example, do not say "Jenny would you like to pick up your toys now?"). Parents should make their directions specific and clear.

Working along side your child is also helpful. Children learn by mimicking their parents. Children respond positively to parents helping them out. Say, "I'll pick up the cars. You pick up the trucks."

Maintain reasonable expectations that are age appropriate. Keep pick up time short as young children lose attention quickly. Working on one part of the room at a time helps to make the task seem less overwhelming.

In addition, parents should avoid bribery with young children. It is not a good idea to promise them a reward for picking up their toys. If you constantly bribe them; they will always expect something. Bribery is not ideal, however; praising the child or turning pick up time into a fun game is a better option.

As your child attempts to pick up toys, immediately praise their effort. You might say,

"Wow, I like how you put your Lego's in the box." Be specific about your praise and say it with meaning. Praise that is specific to the task is more effective. You do not need to wait until all the toys are picked up to offer praise. Praise encourages young children to pick up more toys.

Games make pick up time fun. Usually young children are more cooperative and enjoy working with a parent when the work is fun. Games such as "Simon Says" or "Mother, May I" can be adapted to picking up toys. Another idea is to close your eyes and ask your child to surprise you by putting some toys away and you will guess which toys they were.

Parents can also turn on a favorite song and try to be finished picking up the toys by the time the music stops playing. Or set a timer or alarm clock and race against the time. Say, "I will time you and see how fast you can pick up your dolls." Parents can test young children's color skills by asking them to pick up all the blue toys, or test their number skills by asking them to pick up three items. Chores can be enjoyable when you make it a game.

Getting young children to pick up their toys can be frustrating. However, parents can make picking up toys a fun, learning activity. When pick up time is over, parents should show their children they appreciate the cooperation with words of praise or hugs.

Active Kids

by *America On the Move*

Cleaning up around the house is a great way to incorporate physical activity in both your and your kids' lives. Try some of these strategies below to help your kids maintain active lives while helping you clean up the house.

1. Choose an activity to go along with each thing they pick up. (For example, each piece of clothing = 5 jumping jacks, each toy = 2 push-ups, etc.) Ask the kids for ideas of other activities to use.
2. Have the kids hop on one foot or skip as they clean up their room. You can join in too!
3. Have the kids team up to bring things upstairs. Have one child bring the toys, laundry, etc. halfway up the stairs, while the other child has to take it up the other half and put it in the proper room.

Creativity can go a long way in getting the kids to enjoy helping out around the house. Challenge the kids to invent other fun, creative ways to help out. You'll be surprised at what they come up with!

For more ideas on how to take steps toward a healthier way of life, visit www.america-onthemove.org

Tips for Eating Right

- Make half your grains whole for energy to run and play.
- Vary your vegetables for a healthy immune system.
- Focus on fruits for energy, healthy skin

and healing cuts and bruises.

- Get calcium-rich foods for strong bones and teeth and to help your heart and muscles work properly.
- Go lean with proteins to build strong muscles.
- Change your oil and get most of your fat sources from fish, nuts and vegetable oils.
- Avoid added sugars by choosing foods and beverages that do not have sugar and caloric sweeteners as one of the first ingredients.



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Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating.