

# How to Turn “Chores” into “Contributions”

## 3 Tips for Success

by Amy McCready  
Founder of Positive Parenting Solutions

### TIP #1: Watch your LANGUAGE.

No, not THAT language! I’m talking about removing the word “chore” from your household vocabulary and replacing it with the word “contribution,” or more specifically, **Family Contribution**.

The difference? Call something a “chore” and you conjure up feelings of drudgery, work, and a put-upon attitude.

The word “contribution,” on the other hand, is empowering (something kids need anyway) and makes them feel significant, like they make a difference, and they’re part of the larger team—your team!

Will it make Susie delighted to unload the dishwasher? Maybe not; but it will send the message that her efforts make an important contribution to the entire family. As a team—when everyone contributes and pitches in—the house runs more smoothly, things get done faster, and there’s more time and energy to have FUN together.

### TIP #2: INVITE Cooperation

Sometimes, the difference in whether we (readily) get cooperation from our kids or not is simply in the way we ask. When we do a lot of “ordering, correcting and directing,” it’s a recipe for power struggles. Even though our requests are reasonable, too much *commanding* makes kids feel bossed around and they’re more likely to dig in their heels and resist.

Instead, try Inviting Cooperation:

*“I’m slammed with work tonight, so anything you could do to clean up from dinner would really help me out.”*

*“We need to unload the camping equipment before dinner. Anything you can do to help would be fabulous!”*

*“Dad looks really tired from doing all the yardwork. I’m sure he’d appreciate a second set of hands for whatever time you can spare.”*

*“I’m feeling overwhelmed with getting everything done before our company arrives. Anything you can do to get your brothers dressed and looking presentable would be a huge help.”*

This simple strategy rephrases requests to appeal to your kids’ need for autonomy and control. Instead of feeling nagged, they can help out on their terms. This strategy allows your child to contribute in a meaningful way and feel good about it!



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Now, sometimes things just have to be done NOW! And in those situations, there's nothing wrong with giving direction. However, the more we "invite cooperation," we'll be more likely to get cooperation when we just need them to Get.Moving.Now!

Even with regular use of the Inviting Cooperation tool, you still may meet some occasional resistance. If so, we have loads of tools to get kids to do what they're supposed to do - without any nagging, reminding or yelling required.

### TIP #3: Let them know you NOTICE.

Why? Because **the difference between a “chore” and a “contribution” is the difference it makes to someone else.** Take that in for a moment. If my work makes a difference for YOU, that makes me feel better about doing that task. Everyone wants to know they make a difference—even when the jobs are “expected.” **Let your kids know the impact of their contributions and what it means to YOU.**

No one likes clearing the table, sweeping a floor, or cleaning out a toy chest—but when your kids notice that you NOTICE—it changes everything. Be specific as you let them know their efforts make a difference:

*“I really appreciate when you put away the folded laundry. I know it’s not your favorite job but it makes huge a difference for me!”*

Or, help your kids understand when everyone helps, everyone wins:

*“Hey, you really helped out the family tonight. Now we have extra time to play a game, go for a bike ride, bake some cookies, etc.”*

Showing appreciation for your kids efforts—even the “expected” jobs—means you’ll have fewer power struggles and better cooperation and that’s a win-win you can count on.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Like any shift in mindset and behaviors, putting these tools in place takes time, practice, and patience. When you feel the shift take root in your home, it will not only be rewarding NOW, but you’ll set the stage for your kids to grow into hard-working, contributing adults. That’s great news—well beyond tidy beds, sorted socks, and swept floors, wouldn’t you say?



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### QUESTIONS ABOUT ANYTHING?

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