

# ROOM CLEAN-UP: AN EXERCISE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



for  
Women

**“Clean up your room!”** This is a common request in many homes, and a commonly ignored request. Try this exercise to see if these seven steps get results.

## 1. Break the big task into little tasks

A chore like cleaning-up is really a series of small tasks. Breaking the big task into chunks helps a child know where to start and gives little triumphs of accomplishment along the way towards the big goal. Start with one request – “Let’s put these toys in the toy box” – and move on to other parts: making the bed, bringing dishes to the kitchen, putting dirty clothes in the laundry, dusting, vacuuming, cleaning the hamster’s cage, and so on.

## 2. Set a (realistic) time limit

Some children can dawdle their way through these tasks over the entire day. Set a time limit, like “Let’s get done by lunch time” or “Let’s get done by 3 o’clock when your sister gets home.”

## 3. Link success with something fun

Children will do something that is not so fun if they expect some fun later. “When we get this finished, we can bake those cup cakes.” Younger children may need smaller rewards for smaller tasks rather than one big reward at the end of a big task. Rewards can include hugs, watching Sesame Street together, or extra time on the swings on your next visit to the park.

## 4. Make it a game

To divert attention from the fact that you are doing a chore, find ways to make the tasks like a game. “Let’s pick up all the orange toys first.” Or “Who can get all the toys picked up first, you or your sister?”

## 5. Make the task reasonable for the age of the child

With little children, you may end up doing most of the work at first. As they get older, let them do more and more. Also, Martha Stewart isn’t dropping by so don’t expect their results to be perfect.

## 6. Offer praise

As each task is completed, give positive feedback. “Good job on the toys!” The final result may not be perfect (they are kids after all) but praise the effort. Trying is sometimes more important than succeeding.

## 7. Clean up YOUR room

If having a clean room is an important feature of life in your home, keep your own room clean.



*These seven steps can also work for other household chores, even homework.*