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Literally hundreds of hours have been put into the preparation of this chore system. Forwarding this ebook to others is tempting, but it defrauds the author and is a form of theft.

This can only be prevented through your honesty.

If you know somebody who truly can't afford this system but would use it and be blessed, the author does give away a certain number of ebooks per month to bless people who wouldn't otherwise be able to purchase the system. Please contact the author directly for more information: info@GoodOldDaysFarm.com

You can join our Easy Peasy Chores Chart community on Facebook here:
www.facebook.com/groups/EasyPeasyChoresChart/

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## How the Easy-Peasy Chores System Came To Be

I hate to clean. I mean I really, really hate cleaning. Seinfeld said that he loves a clean house, he just hates cleaning it.... He said when you add "i-n-g" to "c-l-e-a-n" it becomes a whole different experience. I quite agree.

When my husband and I bought our first house, I was not prepared to clean it. The house came with parts that I didn't even know needed cleaning! Who knew that you have to wash baseboards and ceiling fans once in a while? I thought when you turn the fan on, the dust blows off. Turned out, I was wrong.

Over the years l've found some creative solutions to the cleaning-dilemma. When my husband was a software engineer I hired a lady to come do my spring cleaning every year. As babies started coming and finances began to stretch, I began bartering with other mamas. "I'll give your child piano lessons if you come fold the laundry!" You don't want to know how many women have folded my husband's underwear... ${ }^{* *}$ sigh**

One night my software-engineer husband came home from work and announced that he was leaving his career to start a farm. (You can read about our software-engineer-turned-farmer adventures at GoodOldDaysFarm.com/blog. ) That was also the year that we had our third baby and started homeschooling! Suddenly, there were 5 of us home all day long... and three of us were under the age of 5! I truly learned the meaning of Proverbs 14:4 which says, "Without oxen a stable stays clean" (New Living Translation). I started saying things like, "I could keep this house clean if y'all weren't here messin' it up all the time!" I was overwhelmed and needed help!

I scoured the Internet looking for a chore system that would offer me hope. I was looking for something comprehensive, customizable and easy to implement... something that would allow me to give the children direction while still enabling them to work independently, without constant supervision. I didn't want to have to re-do my chore system later, so I wanted something that they could grow into. I needed a chore system that would be low-maintenance for me, but still enticing enough that the children would be excited to get their chores done when the "newness" of the system wore off... and it wouldn't hurt if it motivated me, too! And who am I kidding? What I really, secretly wanted was a chore system that would clean the house for me. Turns out, I couldn't find one like that. So, I started looking for women who seemed to really have everything pulled together... and grilling them with ever-so-clever questions like, "How do you do it?!?!" At first, they just laughed! Apparently my problem is not unique to FarmLadies!

What follows in these pages is the system that I developed after speaking to dozens of Moms who had already walked this path before me. And you know what? The system l've come up with really does sort of keep your house clean all by itself. (Ok... not exactly all by itself. It requires people... But it has sure helped me get organized and taught my children to take pride in a clean, sparkly house. To me, that's almost as good as a self-cleaning house!) Is our house perfect? No! We live here and we make messes, but that's ok, as long as we clean them up! Like any chore system, the Easy-Peasy Chore System is only as effective as you are. If you set this system up and then actually do it, you can have an almost-self-cleaning-house, too!

## What Is The Easy Peasy System?

Simply put, I have harnessed the power of baseball cards! Baseball cards are colorful and appealing. Children love them and even adults collect them. They're also very practical. They pack a lot of information on a small little card. There are clever ways to store them so that they don't get damaged and they don't get all over your house. That sounds like the makings of an excellent chore system to me!

In this ebook you will find one card for every chore in the house. There are a total of 300 cards in this ebook. Now before you imagine 300 cards spread out all over your house and faint, don’t panic! You are not going to print all these cards off at once! That would be overwhelming! Also, many of the jobs are duplicate to make the printing and organizing process fast and simple.

I once had a chore system with chores on individual cards. It worked really well until my toddler turned the box of cards upside down and got cards everywhere. I got discouraged at the idea of organizing that many cards again and that was the end of that system at our house! This system - The Easy Peasy Chore System - is partially a result of that experience. The secret to keeping the system contained is to keep all the cards in baseball card holders. There is never a reason to pull the cards out, so they don't make a mess!

## Extra Materials You May Want to Set Up This System

Below are the materials I used to set up the system. For your convenience, I have compiled a list of links to where you can purchase everything you need! Just click here.
$\checkmark$ 25-30 baseball card protectors (Depending on how you customize the system to suit your needs)
$\checkmark$ Cardstock (to print the cards on)
$\checkmark$ Scissors or a paper cutter to cut them out
$\checkmark$ Tape
$\checkmark$ Small 3/4" button magnets (Sold in package of 50 . The average family uses 1 package for every 2 people)
$\checkmark$ Gold Star Stickers that will fit on the magnets
$\checkmark$ Assorted Stickers that will fit on the magnets

Almost all of the items listed above are optional! For more frugal options, please see page 8. There are suggestions for using this system without purchasing baseball card holders as well as alternatives to using magnets and stickers.

## A word About Stickers:

When purchasing stickers, you'll need a different design or colored sticker for each member of the family using the Easy-Peasy Chore System. At my house I use a different colored happy face for each member of the family. If I was setting this up again I might get stickers of things they love... duck stickers for my daughter and car and truck stickers for the boys... Be creative! Just be sure that the stickers you buy will fit on the $3 / 4$ " magnets you buy!

## What Is A "Card Sleeve?"

Baseball card protectors will hold 9 cards. Very often you will need more than 9 cards to be filed together, so we create a "Card Sleeve" by taping the baseball card protectors together. Simply trim off the spine of the second baseball card holder and tape it to the first baseball card holder. Be sure to leave just enough space between the baseball card holders so that you can fold the sleeve up. Also, be careful to place the tape on the back of the baseball card protector so that you don't tape the card openings shut!


You will need to place the baseball card holders horizontally in order for the cards to display correctly. For each sleeve, place two copies of the appropriate label back-to-back in the slot on the upper left. This will allow you to identify the chart from a distance when it is hanging on the fridge and when it is folded in your binder.

Once the card sleeves have been assembled, fold each one up and file it in a 1" binder until you are ready to use it!

## You'll Also Need Magnets...

Place a decorative sticker on the front of each magnet and a gold star sticker on the back. You'll want to make a different set of matching magnets for each person in the family who is using the Easy Peasy Chore System. How many magnets you'll want for each person will depend on their age and how many chores you want them to do. You may want to make the magnets over the next few days on an as-needed basis to figure out what works for your family!

## How to Set Up \& Use the Easy-Peasy Chores System:

Decide which of the 3 basic methods you will use to set your card system up:

Method \#1: By Person - File all the cards that each family member will be responsible for in separate card sleeves, one sleeve per person. When you are assigning chores put one magnet (decorative side up) on the chore card. When the child has finished he/she simply flips the magnet over to reveal the gold star to show you that the chore is complete! If you want to check their work place 2 magnets on each chore (as in the photo below). After the child has flipped over the first magnet indicating that they are finished, you will know it is time to check their work. If their work is satisfactory, simply flip the second magnet over to indicate a job well done! If the job needs to be re-done, turn the first magnet back over to decorative-side-up to indicate that the job is not complete. Click here for a detailed, step-by-step photo tutorial.

Method \#2: By Day of the Week - All the cards you plan to work on for Monday go in one Card Sleeve, Tuesdays go in another, etc... On Monday you hang Monday's Card Sleeve. Since each person has their own set of magnets you can indicate who will do which chore by placing anyone's magnet over the chore you want them to do. When the child is finished their chore they flip the magnet over to let you know their work is complete. If you want to check their work place 2 matching magnets on each chore. After the child has flipped over the first magnet indicating that they are finished, you will know it is time to check their work. If their work is satisfactory, simply flip the second magnet over to show your approval! Click here for a detailed, step-by-step photo tutorial.

Method \#3: By Area - This system complements FlyLady and the Sidetracked Home Executives "Zone" Systems nicely and is the easiest to set up! Simply place all the cards for each area in its own Card Sleeve. At the beginning of the week you will hang the Card Sleeve for whichever area (or zone) you are working on that week. You now have a visual chart of all the chores that the whole family needs to do this week. Decide how many deep cleaning days you want to have this week. It usually works out that I have 3 days a week to spend some time deep cleaning. In my mind I divide the chart into thirds. On the upper third I assign each family member a few chores using the sticker-coded magnets. On our next cleaning day I will assign the middle of the chart and on the final cleaning day this week I will assign the bottom third of the chart. As with the other methods, placing one magnet will allow your family to know who does what chore. They can flip the magnet over to indicate that the chore is complete. If you want to inspect their work, simply place a second matching magnet on each chore and flip it over when the child's work passes your inspection. Click here for a detailed, step-by-step photo tutorial.


As a fun note, my children are at an age that I always need to inspect their work... but I also let them inspect my work! They love playing inspector!

With this chore system, you are not going to have to direct traffic! Now the chart is the voice of direction. Each child looks at the chart, finds "their" magnet and does the item that is listed on the card. When they've completed that item they simply flip their magnet over, revealing the gold star on the back!

Here's the amazing part... Now, with this system, you can see what everyone has done! A simple glance at the chart will tell you who has brushed their teeth this morning and who hasn't. If one child has forgotten, you know exactly who it was! No more smelling everybody's breath or feeling toothbrushes to make sure their dental hygiene is up to par!

## Frugal Options

If you don't want to spend the money on magnets and stickers here are a few frugal ways to use the system:

- Place colored paper clips along the opening of the baseball card pocket. Then slide the paperclips back and forth to indicate when a chore has been done and when it's been inspected. Assign one color of paperclip to each family member.
- Write on the front of the baseball card pocket with dry erase markers! Use the child's name or initial to assign the chore and checkmarks to indicate that the chore is done.

If you don't want to spend money on baseball card holders here are some suggestions:

- Look for Baseball Card holders at garage sales! Sometimes you can find binders full of them for just a dollar or two!
- Print the chore cards, but instead of cutting them out, leave the sheets whole. (You can place the sheets in a page protector if you'd like.) Then proceed in placing the magnets over the chores as you would on the baseball cards. This system works particularly well if you don't need to customize the chore lists very much and are planning to do all/most of the chores listed.
- Print the chore cards and cut them out, then create a customized chart by gluing the cards you wish to use on posterboard.

How do you display your chore chart? I would LOVE to see a picture and share it on our Easy Peasy Chores Pinterest Board!

## The Cards

On the following pages you will find the cards that are the heart of the Easy Peasy Chore System. Each card contains one chore that needs to be done. There is a picture that accompanies the word so that even the littlest children can recognize what the chore is without necessarily having to ask Mama. This fosters independence and confidence.

Do not print all these cards off at once! Pick one area that you want to work on this week and just print those cards.

I suggest starting with the evening routine cards. Then, when your family has mastered this, add the morning routine. Once you have firmly established evening and morning routines you can begin to add the cleaning cards, one section at a time.

Another good section to start with is the "Quick Clean Up." These cards allow you to get the whole house somewhat presentable, quickly. These cards are NOT intended for deep-cleaning!

I know it's tempting to print everything off immediately so that you can get organized "Right Now!" But if you do that you'll end up with an overwhelming mess of cards everywhere! So, one step at a time, please...!

Finally, don't feel that you need to be doing all these chores! These cards represent a wide variety of tasks so that the system will meet the needs of most families. Even I don't do all these cards! Print them out and then simply throw away the cards that don't apply to your home. If there's something that needs to be done that isn't in the cards, use the blank cards on page 121 to add it to your family's customized chore system!

## Evening Routine

Having an efficient evening routine makes tomorrow morning go so much more smoothly!
Finish Homework

| Wash Your Face <br> Evening Routine | Teeth <br> Evening Routine |
| :---: | :---: |
| Pick clothes for tomorrow | Get into Pajamas |
| Holy Bible <br> Bible Time | Take Medications |
| Brush or Comb Hair | Review tomorrow's to-do List |


| Check Tomorrow's Menu \& Defrost Anything Needed <br> Evening Routine | Drink Water <br> Evening Routine |
| :---: | :---: |
| Pack Tomorrow's Lunch | Make a cup of tea <br> Evening Routine |
| Piano <br>  Practice <br> Evening Routine | Music Practice <br> PRACTICE |
| Evening Routine | Evening Routine |

## Morning Routine

It can be so hard to get everyone out the door in the morning!
A solid morning routine will help get your day started right!
Sear God...

| Make Coffee or Tea <br> Morning Routine | Eat Breakfast |
| :---: | :---: |
|  | Take Medications <br> Morning Routine |
|  | Drink Water <br> Morning Routine |
| Start a load of Laundry <br> LAUNDRY54 | Fill Water Bottles (and sippy cups) with water |

## Homeschooling

These cards will help you organize your homeschool classes. Cut out the subjects you are studying, then place them in the cardsleeve to use as a school day checklist. As your child completes each subject, he/she may mark it completed by turning their magnet over, just as they would do for household chores!

Feel free to write the daily assignments on the cards! You might want to write directly on the cards (and save the cards for your records) or you could use a dry erase marker to write the assignments on the outside of the cardsleeve. This makes your chart reusable, because it can wiped off at the end of the day.

|  |  |
| :---: | :---: |
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## Table Time

Preparing meals, eating and then cleaning up can take up to several hours each day! Using the Table Time chart can help each member of your family know exactly what is their contribution to the family meals!

Meal time is golden opportunity to really connect with your children and also teach them good habits and great manners! For more ideas about how you can optimize this time with your children, please see our family's Table Time Guidelines in the Appendix on page 94.

|  |  |
| :---: | :---: |
|  | Clear \& Wipe Table Inver |
| Put Hacemais away $\qquad$ | Take Compost Outside |
| Wash Dishes Rrim $1 \frac{1}{2}$ |  |


| Put <br> Dishes <br> Away <br> Table Time | Wipe Counter <br> Table Time |
| :---: | :---: |
| Clean Floor <br> Table Time | Load Dishwasher <br> Table Time |
| Empty Dishwasher <br> Table Time | Set Table |
| Put Food Away <br> Table Time | Change Dishtowel |

## Quick Clean Up (Whole House)

This section is NOT detailed cleaning... This is the card sleeve to pull out when you just when you want to get the whole house reasonably under control in a short period of time!

| Kitchen <br> Quick Clean Up! |  |
| :---: | :---: |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |


| Change Bedsheets |  |
| :---: | :---: |
| Wipe Down Doors <br> Inside \& Outside | Wipe Walls \& Lightswitches |
| Mirrors \& Glass | Is the Laundry Finished? <br> Quick Clean Up |
| Empty Trash \& Recycling <br> * <br> Quick Clean Up! | auick crean Upi |

## The Kitchen

Ok.... Now we're getting into deep cleaning! I find that the kitchen tends to require the most work of any room in the house to keep clean. There are other areas that you can double up on. For example, you can probably deep clean the living room and the porch on the same day if you wanted to. The kitchen is not one of those areas! I strongly suggest spending some time each month giving the kitchen your complete focus! I clean my house using the "by area" method so I will spend some time deep cleaning the kitchen each day for an entire week!

| Organize Pantry <br> Kitchen | Quickly Tidy Pantry <br> Kitchen |
| :---: | :---: |
|  | Clean Inside of Fridge |
| Wipe Outside of Fridge | Clean Inside of Freezer |
| Wipe Outside of Freezer | Wipe Outside of Dishwasher |


| Polish Silverware $\square$ | Declutter Junk Drawer Declutter Junk Drawer <br> Kitchen |
| :---: | :---: |
| Organize Cups | Organize Food Storage Containers |
| Clean Baking／Spice Cupboard苗㽞冒冒冒冒冒苗冒亘 <br>  <br>  | Organize Utensil Drawer |
| Organize Appliance Cupboard | Tidy Pots \＆Pans |


| Scrub Counters <br> Kitchen | Tidy Cookbooks <br> Kitchen |
| :---: | :---: |
|  | Clean Under Sink <br> Kitchen |
| Clean Stove Top <br> Kitchen | Clean Oven |
|  | Wipe Cabinets <br> Kitchen |


| Wipe Small Appliances |  |
| :---: | :---: |
| Clean Baseboards | Wipe Walls \& Lightswitches |
|  | Change Dishtowel <br> Kitchen |
| Empty Trash \& Recycling <br> 8 | Kichen |

## Dining Room

Your home may or may not have a formal dining room. In our home, our table is right in our kitchen, so I have these cards filed with the kitchen cards.
Clean Ceiling Fan

## Living Room / Family Room

This is probably a room that your family spends a lot of time in together! Keeping it clean and adding welcoming touches blesses your family!

| QuickClean Up! | Clean Cofiee Tables |
| :---: | :---: |
| Put things away |  |
| Climporn |  |

Living Room

## Bedrooms

Is there anything more lovely than going to bed in a clean, peaceful room? With some regular maintenance, all the bedrooms in your home can be a restful haven! (Yes, even your children's rooms!)
OuickClean Up!


| Tidy Closet Quickly <br> Bedroom |  |
| :---: | :---: |
| Wipe Walls and Door <br> Bedroom | Match Shoes \& Put Away <br> Bedroom |
| Bedroom | Bedroom |
| Bedroom | Bedroom |

## Bathrooms

Cleaning the bathroom does not have to be the nastiest chore of the house!

| QuickClean Up! Put things away | Clean Sink <br> Bathroom |
| :---: | :---: |
| Clean Toilet | Clean Shower / Tub |
| Wipe Cabinets <br> Mra <br> II <br> Bathroom | Organize a Cabinet |
|  | Sweep / Mop Floor <br> Bathroom |


|  | Shake Area Rugs |
| :---: | :---: |
| Tidy Linen <br> Closit <br> Bathroom | Empty \& Clean Garbage |
| Clean Diaper Pail <br> Bathroom | Change Hand Towels |
|  | Wipe Doors and Walls <br> Bathroom |

## Schoolroom

| QuickClean Up! Put things away | Dust Furniture <br> Schoolroom |
| :---: | :---: |
| Clear Computer Desk <br> Schoolroom | Wipe Computer Screen |
| Organize Supplies <br> Schoolroom | Sort Puzzles \& Games |
| Wipe Doors and Walls | Clean A <br> Shelf <br> Schoolroom |

Tidy Bookshelves

## Office

| QuickClean Up! Put things away | Clear Computer Desk <br> Office |
| :---: | :---: |
| Empty \& Clean Trash Can <br> Office | Dust Furniture <br> Office |
| Wipe Computer Screen | Wash Windows |
| Wipe Doors and Walls | Clean Floors |

Tidy Bookshelves

## Laundry Area \& Utility Room

Laundry is one of those never-ending chores that we just have to do... but it can be made less tedious if our laundry area is clean and pleasant!

These cards are simply to help keep your laundry room and/or utility room clean. For a detailed run-down of my laundry system, please see my ebook:

Love Your Laundry: A Laundry System That Actually Works

| QuickClean Up! Put things away | Wipe Hot Water Heater <br> Laundry / Utility Room |
| :---: | :---: |
| Empty \& Clean Trash Can <br> Laundry / Utility Room | Wipe Extra Freezer |
| Organize Cupboards \& Sheves | Wash Windows |
| Wipe Doors and Walls |  |


| Laundry / Utility Room | Clean Behind Washer \& Dryer <br> Laundry / Utility Room |
| :---: | :---: |
| Wipe Baseboards | Laundry / Utility Room |
| Laundry / Utility Room | Laundry / Utility Room |
| Laundry / Utility Room | Laundry / Utility Room |

Hallway

| QuickClean Up! <br> Put things away <br> Hallway | Organize Hall Closet |
| :---: | :---: |
| Wipe Doors and Walls | Wipe Baseboards |
| Wash Windows |  |
| Halway | Halway |

## Toyroom/Playroom

| Put Toys Away | Clean A <br> Shelf <br> Toyroom |
| :---: | :---: |
| Wipe Doors and Walls <br> Toyroom | Wipe Baseboards |
| Wash Windows |  |
| Sort Puzzles Toyroom |  |

Organize Tovs

## Misc. Chores

|  | Bake Something |
| :---: | :---: |
| Wipe Windowsills throughout house <br> Misc. Chores | Wipe Blinds throughout house $\square$ |
| Wipe Garage Doors | Laundry |
|  | Water Indoor Plants <br> Misc. Chores |

## Outdoor Jobs



|  |  |
| :---: | :---: |
|  | Clean Grill |
|  |  |
| Clean Pet Area <br> Outside | Check Mail <br> Outside |


| Get Newspaper <br> NEWSPAPER <br> Outside | Wash Window Screens |
| :---: | :---: |
|  |  |
|  | Water Flowers <br> Outside |
| Water Garden | Water Trees |


| Water Grass | Clean Garbage Can |
| :---: | :---: |
| Clean Recycle Bin |  |
| Fill Birdfeeder <br> Outside |  |
| Outside | Outside |

## Vehicles

I've heard it said that the state of your vehicle reflects the state of your life. There must be some truth in that because I know people who, when considering a potential employee, will check out that person's vehicle before deciding whether or not to hire them! These cards will help keep your vehicle looking nice.

| Wash Car | Clean Inside <br> Vehicles |
| :---: | :---: |
| Remove Trash From Car <br> Vehicles | Vacuum Inside Car |
| Wipe Car Dashboard <br> Vehicles | Wipe Inside Windows <br> Vehicles |
| Clean \& Check Carseats <br> Vehicles | Vehicles |


| Wash Van | Cean Inside <br> Vehicles |
| :---: | :---: |
| Remove Trash From Van <br> Vehicles | Vacuum Inside Van |
| Wipe Van Dashboard <br> Vehicles | Wipe Inside Windows <br> Vehicles |
| Clean \& Check Carseats <br> Vehicles | Vehicles |


|  | Clean Inside <br> Vehicles |
| :---: | :---: |
| Remove Trash From Truck <br> Vehicles | Vacuum Inside Truck |
| Wipe Truck Dashboard <br> Vehicles | Wipe Inside Windows <br> Vehicles |
| Clean \& Check Carseats <br> Vehicles | Vehicles |

## Extra "Ask Mom \& Dad" Cards

Once the children have finished all their assigned chores for the day, I like to assign one last card... the "Ask An Adult" cards... When the children check in with you, you will know that their jobs are done for the day. You can take this opportunity to inspect the children's work, give them an extra task that isn't on the chart or maybe even just give them a surprise to thank them for a job well done!

On the following pages you will find a variety of cards representing families of three different skin tones. You will find "Ask Mom \& Dad" cards, "Ask Dad" cards and "Ask Mom" cards for each family. Since nearly $51 / 2$ million children across America are being raised by their grandparents, you will also find "Ask Grandma \& Grandpa" cards, "Ask Grandpa" and "Ask Grandma" cards.


|  |  |
| :---: | :---: |
|  |  |
| Ask Dad |  |
|  | Ask Dad |


| Ask Mom | Ask Mom |
| :---: | :---: |
|  |  |
| Ask Mom | Ask Mom |
| Ask Mom | Ask Mom |

## Ask Grandma \& Grandpa Ask Grandma \& Grandpa



Ask Grandma \& Grandpa
Ask Grandma \& Grandpa


Ask Grandma \& Grandpa
Ask Grandma \& Grandpa
 Ask Grandma \& Grandpa

Ask Grandma \& Grandpa

Ask Grandpa

| Ask Grandma | Ask Grandma |
| :---: | :---: |
| Ask Grandma | Ask Grandma |
| Ask Grandma | Ask Grandma |
| Ask Grandma | Ask Grandma |


Ask Dad
Ask Mom

## Ask Grandma \& Grandpa Ask Grandma \& Grandpa



Ask Grandma \& Grandpa
Ask Grandma \& Grandpa


Ask Grandma \& Grandpa
Ask Grandma \& Grandpa


Ask Grandma \& Grandpa
Ask Grandma \& Grandpa

Ask Grandpa
Ask Grandma

Ask Dad
Ask Mom

Ask Grandpa


## Labels

In this section you will find labels for various ways of organizing your chore sleeves. Do not, do not, DO NOT print all the labels off! Refer back to page 7 and decide how you will be filing the chore cards, then print off only the labels that apply!

Print off 2 copies of the label cards you need. Then place the matching label cards back-to-back in the appropriate card sleeve. I like to put my labels in the upper left corner so that I can identify the card sleeve from a distance when it is hanging on the fridge. I put a second label on the back side of the card sleeve so that I can also identify the various sleeves quickly and easily when they are folded and put in the binder.

On the following pages you will find labels for filing your cards: By room name/Area, by day of the week, by zone and by frequency. I've also included some blank labels to make your system completely customizable!








## Blank Cards

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t
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## Appendix

## Seven Simple Guidelines for A Happy Chore Time

1. Don't ever, Ever, EVER use chores for discipline. We want to teach our children that work is part of life and should be done well and with a good attitude. If we resort to using chores for discipline, we infuse a lot of negative emotions into chore time and we subconsciously teach our children that work is a punishment... a drudgery to be dreaded. Anyway, using chores doesn't usually "fit the crime" so to speak. "You hit your brother so now you need to go sweep the floor" doesn't make any sense. Find punishments that are relevant cause-and-effect consequences... but don't punish with chores if you want your children to enjoy chore time! (For Instruction In Righteousness by Pam Forster is a great Bible-Based Resource for finding punishments that are relevant consequences.)
2. Work With Your Children. I may affectionately call my children "The Little Farmhands" on the blog, but in actual fact, while the children do need to pitch in, they're not the slaves-in-residence. Even now, at the ripe old age of 35 years old, l'd rather work with a group of happy friends than by myself. Your children feel the same way. Working together gives you a common goal and will bind your hearts together. Use this precious opportunity to fellowship with them and become their best friend!
3. Teach Your Children How It Should Be Done. So often we tell our children to go do something and then get frustrated because it isn't done up to snuff. I wasn't born knowing how to clean a house, you weren't born knowing how to clean, and they weren't either. Take the time to show them how to do it. Work with them for a few days until they are pros! If they forget, work with them again until they remember!
4. Smile and be Happy! Your children take their cue from you. If you don't want children who whine and say, "Do I HAVE to?" then set the tone by being a joyful worker yourself! (You have something to be happy about... you are training little helpers and as soon as they are fully trained you're life is going to get a lot easier! If that's not something to smile about, I don't know what is!)
5. Do A Little Every Day. I can't tell you how many times I have said, "Today we are going to clean this whole house and it is going to stay that way!!!" But the fact is, it never does stay that way. So set 15 or 30 or 45 minutes aside each day for chores. (If you're going to spend longer than 30 minutes each day on chores, I always suggest dividing that time up throughout the day.) Thirty minutes a day every day for a week is far more effective than saving up and torturing everyone with $31 / 2$ hours of housework on the weekend! In our home, we do some chores in the morning and some in the afternoon. Then in the evening we do a quick pickup of the entire house. Being consistent is so important! If you're not consistent the mess sneaks up on you and before you know it, you're overwhelmed. But if you win a little battle with the dust bunnies each day, those small victories add up!
6. There's Nothing Wrong With a Little Old Fashioned Bribery (We call it "Rewards") Ok, I confess. I might look like a grown up on the outside, but there is a little girl who lives inside of me and she really likes special treats and surprises! Sometimes I will think to myself, "Ok I'll just do $\mathrm{x}, \mathrm{y}$ and z and then I will sit down with my new book and read for a while." I often motivate myself with rewards! Why not motivate our children that way? (We can't reward children all the time. Sometimes they need to just obey because you said so. But hey they are going to be helping you a lot with this chore system! Show them how much you appreciate their help!) I have it on good authority that $99.785 \%$ of children like special treats as much as I do. (Ok, I made that statistic up!) If you happen to have the one child in the universe who doesn't like surprises you probably don't even need this chore system because your house is probably always immaculate with a child like that living in it! But if you are like the rest of us, go ahead and make chore time fun by rewarding your children for a job well done Just be careful not to turn chore time into a competition where you pit your children against each other. The goal is to have a clean house and since this is a space we all share, it's a goal that we want to work towards together. The Pebble Game is my way of rewarding the whole family together! You'll read more about that later... For now, just know that rewards don't have to be expensive! Quality time together or even just high-five's all around can be a fun reward. My 6 year old son loves it when I announce to everyone in my most circus-ringmaster-like voice, "Ladies and Gentlemen, this boy right here is a super-star pot-scrubber! His pot scrubbing skills are simply amazing!" (He really is a super-star-pot-scrubber!)
7. Be lavish in Your Praise! Dale Carnegie (of How To Win Friends And Influence People-fame) said it first: "Be hearty in your approbation and lavish in your praise." It's advice that works in business and I promise it will work with your children. After all, if somebody showers you in praise, aren't you more likely to give them your best than if they're griping and complaining about how what you did isn't good enough and you need to go back and do it again? Exactly! Now sometimes the housework our children have done really does need to be done again... but remember that they are in training! If they're truly old enough to have done a better job and they're just slacking then that needs to be addressed. But if they're still learning, praise them for their effort. Either live with a job less-than-perfectly done and have somebody else clean it next time or go back and tweak their work when nobody's looking. Above all... encourage, encourage, encourage!

## Table Time

When you're trying to feed a family healthy, wholesome meals, the result is that you can spend a lot of time in the kitchen preparing food, eating and then cleaning up! Once upon a time, I was spending those hours in the kitchen by myself. The family arrived just in time to eat and then disappeared again when it was time to wash the dishes. I was starting to feel resentful. Here is our family's meal time routine that makes meal times a much more pleasant experience for everyone.... Including Mama!

1. The Bible before Breakfast! There is so much value in offering God the first few moments of your day! Your children may be too hungry to have a 45-minute family worship before breakfast, but try taking 1 or2 minutes to start the family's day be reading a Proverb! It will teach your children that spiritual food is as important as physical food. (If you're not the religious sort, spend a few minutes reading something else that is good "Food for Thought.")
2. There is a French saying, "A good man feeds his animals before he feeds himself." Teach your children to feed their pets before they sit down for breakfast so that you don't have problems with somebody perpetually forgetting to feed Fido. This is a great way to put in practice everything we are trying to teach our children about being compassionate and thinking of others before they think of themselves.
3. Five minutes before meal time we ring the " 5 -minute bell." This gives everyone in the family a headsup that dinner will be served in 5 minutes and that they need to quickly finish what they are doing, wash their hands and make an appearance at the dinner table. If you don't have a bell you can get a fancy cast-iron dinner bell to ring or you can just walk through the house using a small handbell. Hey, you can even just bang a couple of spoons together if you want. Anything that makes noise will work! This gets everyone to the table on time!
4. Children have permanent seats at the table. This eliminates arguments over who is going to sit where. Our table sits up against a wall so we have our children sit on the opposite side of the table. This way sticky fingerprints only get on the table instead of on the table and on the wall!
5. Determining whether or not children should finish everything on their plate is a tricky area! On one hand we don't want our children to waste food, but on the other hand we don't want them to overeat either. The body gives a signal when we have eaten enough food and we don't want to train our children to ignore that signal. Our family's solution has been implementing a rule that anyone who is old enough to serve themselves must eat everything on their plate. If a child doesn't eat everything on their plate, the food will appear again at the next meal. (It usually only takes doing that once or twice in a lifetime before the children understand that Mama means business!) We encourage the children to just try a little bit of something if they aren't sure whether or not they will like it. They can have as many servings as they would like, but they must eat everything they take. Now, for a child who is not old enough to serve themselves it's a different story! Daddy usually finishes anything left on the baby's plate! (Mama thinks that's gross!)
6. We have a firm "no snacking" rule. The stomach needs to digest its food and have a chance to rest between meals. In my experience, children who snack between meals tend to be pickier eaters at mealtime because they're already half-full.
7. We often receive compliments about how well our children eat raw fruits and vegetables! In our home, we always serve raw food before bringing out the cooked food. Mixed greens with a delicious homemade dressing is hard to resist when you're hungry! We will often eat two or three plates of salad before moving on to cooked food. (Yes, I'm talking about my children, too!) Raw salad has so much nutrition in it and it's a great way to start a meal!
8. At the end of the meal nobody leaves the table until they have been excused. Sometimes the adults might want to linger over their meal longer than the children. In that case the children only have to wait until all the children are finished eating. If a child needs to go to the bathroom before the meal is over they are permitted to do so, but they must return to the table as soon as they have taken care of business (and washed their hands... with soap).
9. Once the meal is over, no one is permitted to leave the kitchen until the kitchen has been cleaned up. I use the Table Time Easy Peasy Chore System cards so that each child knows what job they need to do. In our home the children always have the same table jobs, so instead of setting the system up with magnets each day, I have just written the children's names directly on the card that they are supposed to complete. As they get older and it's time to switch who does what job, l'll just print off a new set of cards. If all the cards haven't been completed, the kitchen is not considered "clean." With everyone pitching in, meal clean-up is quick and easy!

## The Pebble Game

Do you remember in the "Seven Simple Steps to a Happy Chore System" that I said to reward our children for a job well-done, but to make sure we don't turn this into a competition and pit our children against each other in the process? Well, the Pebble System is my family's favorite reward system!

It's a system that I learned in Teacher's College from a teacher who was very popular with his students. When I saw the system he used to movitate his students I could see why he was so popular!

The pebble system requires two of the largest glass jars you can find. (I use huge pickle jars... which is cheaper than buying a fancy glass jar at a craft store, plus there's the added bonus of getting to eat the pickles!) You'll also need something to fill the jars with. You could use marbles, pennies, buttons, rocks... anything really. I have chosen to use little glass pebbles (usually used for flower arranging) that match the colors in my kitchen. (I bought mine at the dollar store!)

To start with, fill one jar with as many glass pebbles as will fit. Set the full jar and the empty jar side by side somewhere. You'll want to do something to the empty jar so that as the jars fill up you don't mix the jars up. I just taped a pretty gift bow on ours.

Discuss as a family what the reward will be that the whole family will be working towards together. It doesn't have to be expensive. It can be a family party with homemade pizza and popcorn. Our family likes to go to a lake about 20 minutes away. Whatever it is that will motivate your family, choose that as your reward! Now, have fun earning the reward together! As you see the children doing a good job with something, let them put a pebble in the jar. When you see someone going the extra mile, put a few pebbles in. As my children are working, if they hear Mama drop a few pebbles in the jar they are motivated to work even harder! Allowing the children to report good behavior that deserves pebbles to me gets their focus on noticing each other's strengths instead of criticizing each other. One time when the children were very little my husband promised them that if they brushed their teeth without being reminded for an entire month he would give them 30 pebbles each! What fun it was to count out 90 pebbles at the end of that month! Just hand out pebbles generously... it's part of being "hearty in your approbation and lavish in your praise"! After all, the reward of family time is fun and you want to do that as often as possible!


## Chore Sticks

Children like variety and so do I! Just to change things up a bit, I have a back-up chore system that I pull out once in a while for fun. This is entirely optional. You don't have to do it... but my children like this system as much as they like the card system and once in a while switching to chore sticks can bring new energy into the same old chores...


Here's what I did: I bought a box of plain, wooden tongue depressors (large $6^{\prime \prime}$ craft sticks). Then, using a black sharpie marker, I wrote every chore listed on the Easy Peasy Chore cards onto the tongue depressors (one chore per stick). That didn't take very long. Then I color-coded the sticks so that kitchen chores were in one color, the sticks with bedroom chores were in another color... you get the idea. This took FOREVER! Two whole afternoons, to be exact! To me it was time well spent because now my chore sticks are easy to sort and they look pretty! Had I known that for only $\$ 3.03$ more I could have purchased large craft sticks that already came colored, I definitely would have done that instead! (Please see my list of resources to find the craft sticks you'll need.)

I set my chore sticks above the sink in pint mason jars. When we decide to use chore sticks, I simply pull out the jar that corresponds to the area that I want to clean and let each child pull out a stick. Now, sometimes a child will pull a stick that they clearly can't (or shouldn't!) do. If that happens I allow the children to switch sticks with a sibling or pull another stick.

This is also a great way to fill little pockets of "down-time" during your day. When a child is finished one task but it's not quite time to start a new task yet, they can just pull a chore stick out of the jar and that will give them something to do for a few minutes!

## About the Author

Alina Joy Dubois is a wife to Papa the Farmer and mother to her 3 Little Farhmands: FarmGirl, FarmBoy and
 FarmBaby (who is just old enough to start objecting to being called "Baby"!)

In 2010, Papa the Farmer announced that he was leaving his career as a software engineer to turn their yard into a small 5 acre farm. Now, they live and work together on the Good Old Days Farm. You can read about the family's adventures in running a farm at www.GoodOldDaysFarm.com/blog

In her pre-marriage-and-children days, Alina Joy obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Literature and a Bachelor of Education in the Primary/Junior division at York University in Toronto, Canada. Neither degree prepared her for keeping her house clean. -)


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