

Life Skills Checklists

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Do you want your child to be prepared for the real world, but you don't know where to start? Here is an age-specific list of abilities that will serve your child well as he or she grows into an independent adult.

ages 4-7

Interactions with others

- Follow directions
- Learn to be a good listener
- Take turns
- Exhibit manners
- Shake hands and greet others
- Make eye contact during conversation
- Show respect for elders

Time management

- Wake in the morning using alarm clock
- Adhere to a daily schedule
- Perform tasks with urgency when a timer is set
- Learn days of the week and months of the year

Money management

- Know coin values
- Keep a coin purse in a safe place
- Understand that money is earned by working
- Consistently save and tithe part of allowance

Organizing and decluttering

- Sort like items for proper storage
- Pick up toys
- Keep clothing on hooks or hangers
- Help tidy living room
- Care for belongings

Repair and maintenance

- Wash yard toys when needed
- Help rake the yard
- Sweep patio
- Pull weeds
- Water plants
- Help wipe up spills

Household basics

- Make bed
- Empty wastebaskets
- Dust
- Help in kitchen: stirring, ripping lettuce
- Assist with loading dishwasher, drying dishes, setting table
- Help carry and put away groceries
- Sweep floors and wipe baseboards
- Hang towels after bath
- Sort dirty clothes by color and clean clothes by family member
- Help fold towels
- Retrieve the mail or newspaper
- Help feed pets

Healthy habits

- Dress self
- Brush teeth and wash hands
- Understand the value of exercise and good nutrition

Decision-making skills

- Have basic understanding of choices and consequences
- Able to choose between two or three selections

ages 8-12

Any of the skills on the 4-7 list, plus

Interactions with others

- Serve others and ask, "How can I help?"
- Know how to make a good first impression
- Ask a service person for help
- Resolve conflict
- Take a phone message
- Able to compromise
- Carry on a conversation with an adult and ask clear questions
- Understand appropriate behavior according to occasion

Time management

- Read an analog clock
- Rearrange tasks to stay on time
- Show concern for turning assignments in on time
- Keep a school planner of assignments
- Work through a checklist of daily tasks

Money management

- Able to perform a transaction with a cashier or bank teller
- Save toward a long-term purchase
- Track spending and saving
- Identify a charitable cause to donate to
- Earn payment for extra chores

Organizing and decluttering

- Keep school papers in order
- Gather supplies needed for a task
- Sort belongings and keep room tidy
- Know which materials are required for the day's schedule

Repair and maintenance

- Wash windows — inside and out
- Help wash car
- Help with yard work
- Shovel snow
- Know how to use basic tools such as hammers and screwdrivers
- Maintain a bicycle — fill tires with air, apply oil for squeaks
- Change light bulbs

Household basics

- Follow a simple recipe
- Wash, dry and put away dishes
- Make school lunches
- Use washer and dryer
- Hang and fold laundry
- Strip and change bed linens
- Vacuum, sweep and mop
- Tidy the house
- Clean bathroom completely
- Take out trash

Healthy habits

- Floss teeth
- Trim nails or file sharp edges
- Choose nutritious snacks and understand the components of a balanced meal
- Know basic first aid

Decision-making skills

- Can gather facts necessary for making informed decisions
- Prioritize tasks
- Determine the most efficient course of action for completing a task
- Respond to peer pressure appropriately

ages 13-15

Any from the previous list, plus

Interactions with others

- Schedule or cancel an appointment
- Tip service people
- Understand how body language communicates to others
- Use public transportation with a group
- Demonstrate empathy toward others
- Talk to teachers about assignments or academic struggles
- Seek permission for time spent away from home and keep parents notified if plans change
- Participate in service activities without the family, with supervision
- Show respect for the opposite sex

Time management

- Manage homework
- Be consistently on time for class and school activities
- Be accountable to parents for extracurricular activities
- Go to bed at an appropriate time
- Use a calendar to keep track of important dates

Money management

- Create and keep a budget
- Count correct change in a money transaction
- Understand the difference between a debit and a credit card
- Take responsibility for cellphone

Organizing and decluttering

- Able to break down complicated projects into simpler tasks
- Organize room biannually to toss things that are no longer needed
- Study for the written driving test independently

Repair and maintenance

- Mow and trim the lawn
- Detail a car
- Help paint and caulk

Household basics

- Prepare a meal
- Make grocery lists
- Shop for groceries
- Do all laundry tasks
- Do clothes mending
- Clean out refrigerator
- Clean stove and oven

Healthy habits

- Understand the dangers of drugs and alcohol
- Eat at least five fruit and vegetable servings a day
- Eat three meals a day
- Know what meal portions are appropriate

Decision-making skills

- Read and decipher fine print, with a parent's help
- Develop a pros and cons list when making a decision
- Understand why some laws have been enacted
- Talk with others about which politicians would be best for office

ages 16-18

Any from the previous list, plus

Interactions with others

- Know how and when to negotiate and compromise
- Hold others accountable
- Use public transportation alone
- Fill out an application and interview for a job
- Initiate contact with colleges and/or employers
- Keep parents notified of whereabouts and time expected home
- Understand what facts to keep personal to avoid identity theft and what can be made public
- Fill out medical/dental forms

Time management

- Use a day planner or app to keep track of multiple obligations
- Manage extracurricular activities
- Identify activities that are time wasters
- Be consistently on time for work and commitments

Money management

- Set up a bank account
- Understand basics of compound interest
- Know the risks of credit cards — and the importance of creditworthiness
- Understand basic premise of investing
- Understand basics of insurance
- Know what to do if a purse or wallet is stolen
- Understand how to read a pay stub with Social Security and income tax withdrawals
- Understand student loan offers and terms of repayment

Organizing and decluttering

- Keep a vehicle free of trash, especially if sharing it with the family

Repair and maintenance

- Check car tire pressure, air filter, oil and fluid levels
- Know when to take car to garage for maintenance or repair
- Use jumper cables
- Change a tire

Household basics

- Understand plumbing basics
- Know electricity basics

Healthy habits

- Know importance of preventive dental and medical care
- Know safe use of over-the-counter and prescription drugs
- Maintain a consistent exercise routine

Decision-making skills

- Read and decipher fine print
- Talk with a career counselor
- Vote (18 only)
- Understand a rental contract for housing (18 only)