



Teaching Your Child to Clean-Up

Cleaning up does not come naturally to most children, though most children enjoy helping adults clean up. Like most every other skill, children need support as they learn to clean up independently. You already know that young children have short attention spans. Did you also know that one of the reasons young children don't clean up is because they are learning cause and effect? As children grow and learn, they develop an understanding that messes are made and rooms get tidy by actively cleaning up, not by magic! Children will learn to clean up by helping you. As children get older, encourage them to help more.

Try these fun strategies to get your young child to help you clean up:

Laundry Basket

Work with your child to collect all of the toys that are on the floor into a laundry basket or box. Then transport the basket to the areas where the toys go by having your child push it along on the floor. Encourage your child to help you take the items out of the basket and put them where they belong.

Spill Patrol

If your child spills, help them wipe it up. Once all the excess paint/water/etc. is cleaned up, then you can do detailed cleaning!

Flash Light

Turn the lights down, and use a flashlight to highlight toys that you want your child to move. Then, highlight where you want your child to take the toy.

Beat the Music

Put on a song (or sing a song) to signal to your child that it is time to clean up. Work with your child to try to clean up everything by the time the song is over.

Count the Toys

Older children may benefit from picking up a certain amount of toys. This can work with younger children as well. Count the toys as you work together to pick them up. Celebrate when you get to a certain number.

First, Clean Up, Then...

Talk about what fun thing you and your child can do after cleaning up such as blowing bubbles, getting to read their favorite story, or another fun project.