

Chores count as therapy, too!

Cleaning up toys: Just like playing with and manipulating toys is beneficial to hand and grasp development, so is cleaning them up. Many times, taking apart toys such as blocks, puzzles and games requires additional fine motor strength and dexterity. In addition, having designated spots for items assists with sorting and direction following.

Dusting: Whether you use a dusting wand or cleaner and cloth, dusting promotes crossing midline while increasing stability of the shoulder and elbow. In addition, dusting can also be a great visual scanning activity by helping children learn they have to scan an entire table or shelf to make sure the dust is gone. Remember that it is ideal to make sure you are practicing this using both hands.

Cleaning windows: Just like dusting, this is another way to address midline crossing and shoulder stability. But by throwing in the vertical component of standing, the challenge and benefit increase.

Laundry: By simply cleaning those dirty clothes off the floor, direction following and sorting are addressed. Pushing or carrying the laundry baskets to and from the laundry room can help achieve proprioceptive input as well as bilateral coordination, shoulder stability and grip strength. For higher-level children, folding helps improve shoulder, wrist and hand development as well as dexterity and precision. For this skill to be the most successful, starting with towels and progressing to pants and shirts is best. And who doesn't want help with matching those socks, which improves visual and sorting/matching skills? This is a great task for your littler ones. Sequencing of a multiple-step task can be addressed by having your child actually use the washer and dryer.

Vacuuming: This is a great bilateral coordination task that provides proprioceptive input while improving shoulder stability. In addition, hand strength is addressed, as children have to maintain their grasp for a prolonged period. Again, visual scanning is required to ensure a full room is cleaned.

Emptying the dishwasher: Even for children who cannot reach the cabinets, emptying the dishes and sorting them on the counter provides practice in grasping items of different sizes and weights. Bilateral skills are required to perform this task, especially if children have to dry off excess water. Like so many of our chores, this is another one that helps improve shoulder, elbow and wrist stability.

Taking out the trash: Whether your child has to push the garbage cans to the road or carry out the bag, this is a great proprioceptive, strengthening and bilateral coordination task.

Feeding pets: Not only is this a great task to teach responsibility for others, but feeding pets also addresses sequencing and multiple step-following skills. In addition, based on how it is set up, carrying food and water bowls improves shoulder stability and balance, a functional skill that can be similar to carrying a lunch tray at school.

Yard work: The list of benefits is long for these tasks. From raking to lawn mowing to weeding, children can work on bilateral coordination, core stability and strengthening, as well as grasp development and strength.

Source: <https://www.southpaw.com/helping-children-meet-therapeutic-needs-through-chores>