

Kids Real Life Training #1: The House

Kids today are pretty savvy about the world around us. Many of them know what is going on through school discussions family discussions even through being on the internet. Little kids can work the electronics and audio visual systems better than any of us adults ever will and they can get around a computer like they were born with one!

All well and good and someday they'll probably have very high paying jobs because of it. However, it's the basic common sense things that kids today have no idea about. For instance, things like balancing a check book, not getting drown in credit card debt, basic money managing, laundry, how to clean, mending clothing, sewing, cooking basics, using tools, fixing things around the house and simply learning how a house works.

I could rant about this for a long time because I feel very sad that home economics and shop are no longer taught in our schools. I think our high school had an auto mechanics class as well. All of these have been replaced with computer and high tech classes. Well, folks, wake up and smell the coffee, (if you know how to use a coffee maker) computers aren't going to clean the house, fix a leaky toilet and sew a button back on your favorite jeans!

So, I am starting a series about what I believe kids need to know. I will be gleaning knowledge from many sources that I will reveal because by talking about this to people I have found many others who feel the way I do and they too have tried to make a statement about it and attempted fixes of their own. It's a crusade people. We need to leave our kids with the knowledge to lead safe, healthy, debt free lives! If we cover those, joy, confidence and self esteem can follow more easily. Plus, if our kids learn early how to do some of the basics, it does take a little bit of the burden off of us. A load of laundry here and there, a trip to the hardware store for the right parts to fix the broken door handle, these helps around the house do good for them and us!

Here is a list of the areas that Matt and I think are important around the house. Once you look over the list, add things that make sense in your own home and maybe even put together a House Book that helps your kid's remember what to do if something does go wrong and you aren't there.

Large Mechanical



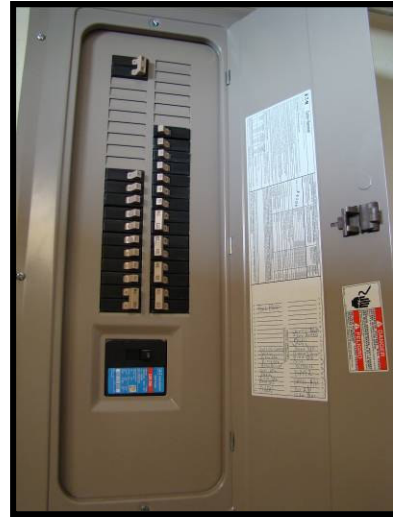
Heating and A/C – Make sure your kids know where the thermostat is located and how to adjust the temperature. Show them the furnace and where the furnace filters go and how to change them, even where to buy new ones. Point out the air condenser for the A/C and tell them to keep the area around them free of loose leaves and debris. Teach them how to turn off these machines as well.

Water Heater – Children need to see the temperature gauge and learn that turning down the temperature during leaves of absence, like vacations, can save energy and dollars.



Main Water Shutoff – There have been a couple times in my life I wish I had known where the main water shut off was to the house. You never know when a pipe will burst or freeze and the faster you can shut off the water the less damage you will incur! Label these so the whole family will recognize them.

Circuit Breaker or Fuse Box – Make sure they know the location, understand when a fuse is blown or a breaker tripped and how to fix both. Also let them know that when working on electrical fixtures in the house, unscrew the fuse or turn off the breaker to the fixture before getting involved with the wiring.



Smaller Mechanical



Even small children can learn how to use the basic appliances throughout your home. Give them weekly jobs of doing a load of wash or loading, starting and emptying the dishwasher. Cleaning out the refrigerator is an eye opening task and helps kids become more familiar with how it's put together and what the temperature controls are all about and that vacuuming the condenser is an easy job and can prolong the life of your appliance. Run them through the ins and outs including upkeep and cleaning of these and other home appliances.

- *Refrigerator
- *Dishwasher
- *Range
- *Oven
- *Microwave
- *Washer & Dryer





At my house I have some equipment that probably wouldn't be considered the basics, but my kids need to know about them as well. For instance, we have a water filter and softener that requires the additional of salt every now and then along with filter changes. This equipment is important to us because it keeps the water drinkable!

Like nearly every home in Florida, we have a pool that has equipment to keep it clean and running smoothly. I've shown my kids how to work the controls several times and they still keep asking. Thus, the idea of the House Book will be used in our home very shortly.



Do you have an alarm system that the kids should understand? I don't even know if I get everything that our does. I think it will call the police and the fire department with the press of a button. The other nice thing about going through all of this with your children is that it becomes a refresher course for YOU!

We have an outdoor grill that I'm going to demonstrate to my kids and maybe I won't have to do both the outdoor and indoor cooking at the same time!! How about the lawn mower, leaf blower and other garden or landscape tools?

Now, there is another side to this story; the side from the kids' point of view. When you tell them you want them to follow you around the house, take notes and learn all about the mechanics of their home, all on a Saturday afternoon. YUK!

So, here are a couple ideas to try.

In case of emergency. Tell your child you want to teach them about just a couple of the items, like the furnace, air conditioner and water heater just in case there is an emergency when you aren't at home. Sometimes letting them know you would trust them to save the house in an emergency boosts their interest and tackling a few things at a time works best.

Tell personal stories. I think we all know that your tone should not be condescending at all. In fact, I try to make it funny because I think they remember it better. Tell a story about something you did that was wrong, like washing a red towel with your tightie whities!

Be patient. Some jobs, actually most jobs like vacuuming, mowing, doing the wash, etc. will require more than one lesson. Stay with your child for several tries until they feel comfortable with the job. They'll tell you when to go away!

Go with the flow! My 10 year old was fascinated when I was teaching him to do the wash. When we opened the washer lid and all the clothes were smashed against the side of the drum he just thought that was the coolest thing! I knew right then that he was hooked and that doing more wash wouldn't be a problem. The vacuum though, that's a different story!

Let them choose. Try asking you child what they would like to learn about, or what interests them in the house? This might be a good way to start so they feel more in control of the learning.

Build self esteem. My little one especially feels great when he can do something with the TV or his game systems that I can't do. Take a moment

to allow your child to teach you something so they see how excited you are to learn. If you're lucky it will rub off on them!

Those are just a few ideas that I have. If you've tried something that really works, let us know. Or, if I've forgotten something important that you'd like to add, list it in the comments section of this article.

Remember, I'm going to make this a series and we'll talk about a lot of different subjects along the way. You've heard it before, "The children ARE our future." Let's make sure they can keep our house in working order, or clothes clean and make us dinner!!! Hahahaha!

Shari



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