

SKILL LEVELS



In other countries, children do a lot of food preparation and cooking. Generally, this is because families have to share a tremendous workload. Often domestic chores will be left to kids while parents work in the fields, herd animals or even leave the home to work in another location. All children are capable and can be taught many skills at an early age. Here are some skills and tasks that young cooks and growing cooks can master:

2 YEAR OLDS

Children want to help at a very early age. When you work with your child in the kitchen, safety is key. Very small children can stay close to you, watch you cook and help in the following ways:

- Wash their hands
- Wipe off counter tops
- Wash fruits and veggies (you can teach them the names of the foods while they wash.)
- Stir batter or other ingredients in bowls
- Mash ingredients with forks or mashers

3-5 YEAR OLDS

Children have widely varied ability levels at these ages. You will be the best judge of which skills your child should try to master first.

- Knead and shape dough
- Grease pans
- Using cookie cutters
- Open packages
- Peel oranges or hard-cooked eggs
- Tear herbs, lettuces, and other leafy veggies
- Spreading peanut butter, butter, and other spreads on bread or dough

5-7 YEAR OLDS

As children get a little older, the skills they are able to master become a little more complex. Always remember to keep an eye on your kiddos in the kitchen, especially when they begin using cutting utensils.

- Measure ingredients
- Cut soft foods with a blunt or plastic knife
- Set the table
- Snip herbs with "school" scissors
- Garnish food
- Making pie crusts and scones by rubbing in flour and butter using fingertips
- Beat eggs or batters with a whisk

8-10 YEAR OLDS

These are the ages where you will begin to let children work with a little more independence. Continue to monitor their safety, giving pointers and tips where needed. Let them problem-solve and plan more at this age to encourage engagement.

- Help plan the meal
- Find ingredients in cupboards, fridge, or spice rack
- Open cans
- Use a peeler, garlic press, and hand grater
- Boil eggs
- Use the microwave, with supervision
- Begin using knives, with supervision
- Make a salad

11-12 YEAR OLDS

At this age, children tend to rush through activities they have done before. Your child may feel s/he is completely capable of all kitchen work at this stage, but when introducing new skills and equipment, continue to provide careful supervision.

- Use a microwave oven
- Prepare simple recipes with few ingredients
- Roast vegetables
- Melt chocolate in the microwave
- Use a hand mixer
- Steam rice
- Begin using the stove and oven, with supervision
- Fry eggs
- Grill sandwiches
- Cook pancakes
- Make soup

13-16 YEAR OLDS

Older cooks like to experiment with recipes and presentation. Allow lots of creativity — while reminding them not to vary the recipes too much — and continue to use safe habits.

- Prepare recipes with multiple ingredients
- Prepare recipes independently
- Safely use kitchen appliances
- Marinate foods
- Bake yeast doughs and pastries

