

year by year

A guide to your child's development from ages 5 to 12

AGES 5 to 7

"Mom, can I redecorate?"

The babyish bunny wallpaper in your 6-year-old's room has got to go. The problem: You want a theme that can carry him through middle school and beyond; he wants a fad like Pokémon. With his tastes changing as quickly as his shoe size, should he get to play decorator?

"The more your child can help make decisions regarding his life, the more in control he'll feel," says Thomas Power, Ph.D., a child psychologist and professor of human development at Washington State University. But make your limits clear. Draw up his wish list together. Talk about budget, explaining what

each item costs and how much money you can spend in total. Discuss how some things (furniture) are major investments, while others (pillowcases, posters) are fun accents that can be changed in a few years, when his tastes are different.

If your child loves basketball, for instance, buy accessories like a wastebasket and desk set in a basketball motif, but don't wallpaper his room and purchase an entire linen set sporting the NBA logo, says Susan Fredman, an interior designer in Highland Park, IL.

Is your kid obsessed with one color—like hot pink? Sprinkle enough



Don't go overboard with themed decor

of this hue around (in a lampshade, small rug, or pillow) to recognize her taste without turning the room permanently Pepto.—*Jacqueline L. Ross*

END BATH-TIME BATTLES

Q My 5-year-old hates taking baths and doesn't seem bothered by going without. Is this normal? How can I help her care more about personal hygiene?

A "Children don't have adults' natural discomfort with being dirty," explains Kathleen McGinley, Ph.D., a child psychologist in Groton, CT. "Their awareness of their presentation to others is not fully formed until the teen



years." That said, you can't let your daughter go through childhood like Pig Pen in "Peanuts." Since she should bathe at least twice a week to keep clean, find ways to make her comfortable, advises American Academy of Pediatrics

spokesperson Laura Fitzmaurice, M.D. Shorten the bath routine—you can even set a timer for five minutes. And make bath time more enticing. Bubbles,

shaving cream, water toys (kitchen utensils count), or music make it more fun.

If these strategies don't help, probe further: Is your child afraid of the water? Did she hear about a drowning on the news, or does she think she'll somehow go down the drain? Reassure her that you're there to protect her, and focus on how natural washing is ("Our bodies are mostly water!"). Or if she wants more privacy, start by leaving the room for a minute or two (make sure the tub is not filled more than halfway).—*Ziona Hochbaum*

Trade tub fears for fun