

Mowing the yard is often one of the first responsibilities given to youth. It can teach important skills about safety and respect.

Although smaller in size than most farm equipment, lawn mowers can be just as dangerous. The moving blades, operating engine, and potential for flying debris make lawn mowers dangerous if not used cautiously and with respect.

Before assigning the task of mowing the yard, consider the youth's physical and cognitive ability. The youth should:

- ▶ Be able to reach the controls without moving from the seat of a riding mower
- ▶ Have the strength to use a push mower
- ▶ Be trained in the safe operation of the mower, including observing an adult

Help make lawn mowing a rewarding and safe chore for children:

- ▶ Explain the dangers of flying objects: Encourage them to pick up debris before mowing
- ▶ Provide and encourage the use of personal protective equipment: eye and ear protection, long pants, sturdy shoes
- ▶ Teach youth to mow across slopes when using a push mower
- ▶ Mow up and down slopes when on a riding mower
- ▶ Always mow dry grass
- ▶ Never point the discharge chute at anyone
- ▶ Never drive or push a mower across gravel with the blade engaged

Like with all equipment, maintenance is key to ensuring the safe use of a lawn mower:

- ▶ Always shut off the engine before servicing
- ▶ Fill the gas tank outside and only when the engine is cool
- ▶ Keep the engine free of oil spills, grass, and leaves

Learning to use a mower properly before children are given the responsibility of working on large, powerful farm equipment can set the safety standard on your farm.

Mowing the yard can be a big step in teaching responsibility to kids. Make sure it's a safe experience.

