

Kids who have it all

Go back just 30 years and look inside a child's bedroom. What do you see? Some books, a few dolls or toy cars, some cuddly animals, and perhaps a desk. Look inside the bedroom of today's kids and it's a 21st century space station.

Computers and other hi-tech toys can make a youngster's bedroom the most expensive room in the house. But it's not only electronic items that push up the value. Today's children also have sports equipment, designer clothes, and accessories such as sunglasses, watches and jewellery. Do they have everything and appreciate nothing? A TV channel tried an experiment. Tanya Bowers reports.



Josh

Hannah

Jon

Emma



Back to the 1970s

- 1** The TV company, Channel 4, transported a typical 21st century family back in time to the 1970s. The Gregory family live in a large house in Milton Keynes. Fifteen years ago the father, Jon, set up his own business and made a fortune. The children, Hannah, 12, and Josh, 10, have huge bedrooms full of expensive hi-tech toys and clothes. They don't have to help at all with the running of the house.
- 2** This is all very different from Jon's childhood in the 70s. He grew up in a small council house in Leeds, one of five children brought up by their father after his mother died. Discipline, order and thrift ruled his life. "We ate what we were given. We walked to school and we had to share all the household chores. We had to do what we were told. Dad was very strict."
- 3** The TV company transformed the Gregorys' house and their lives. For two weeks the family had to go back to the 70s and live Jon's childhood. The house was stripped of all modern gadgets and equipment. Hannah and Josh had to wash and iron their own clothes, do all the washing-up and help dig the vegetable garden. The family car was exchanged for a battered, old VW van and they had to live on just £39 a week.
- 4** At first there were tears and furious rows as the children tried to adjust. Hannah couldn't believe that she wasn't allowed to buy hair mousse and was horrified to find her wardrobe emptied, leaving her with just jeans, two tops and a 'Sunday Best'. Josh had to give up watching his wide-screen television and take up the piano. They didn't have to walk to school but were filled with embarrassment when their dad drove them to the school in their 'new' van.



5 However, gradually Hannah and Josh learnt to appreciate small treats. They enjoyed eating the vegetables they'd dug up from the garden. They made some extra money by selling cookies they'd baked to their neighbours. They started to save rather than spend and understand the value of a £90 pair of trainers.

What should today's parents do?

It's difficult to get things right as a parent. Jon says: "We shouldn't give in to our kids' demands. There's no feeling like getting something you've worked really hard for." Hannah now has £30 in the bank, all earned by doing extra jobs round the house. She has learnt some valuable lessons about life and she doesn't buy hair mousse any more!