

Tips for toilet training

Toilet training can be a tricky part of a child's development; therefore, you may need to consider the best way to approach it. Being aware of the signs and understanding that everyone is unique may help you with the process.

There may be a variety of reasons why your child is finding this area of development tricky including:

- Communication differences- your child may be unable to tell you when they need the toilet.
- Delay in cognitive or motor skills needed to be able to use a toilet/potty effectively.
- Sensory differences, for example connecting the sensation with the need to go to the toilet.

While we would always advise you to seek advice from a toileting specialist for more intensive support, here are some ideas to think about:

- Start by ruling out any medical conditions that could be the cause of your child's delay with toilet training: You could speak to your GP about this, or a bladder and bowel nurse.
- Never use discipline in response to your child having wet or soiling accidents: This will associate negative feelings to toileting.
- Consider timing: Ideally there should be no other distractions or life changes going on at the same time.
- Think about individual needs: By focusing on your child's developmental age rather than their chronological age you will be able to understand what they need, better. Some children may skip the potty stage and go straight to using the toilet.
- Be patient and committed to this process: Although it can be a challenging and lengthy process, remain consistent.
- Be aware of your own feelings when supporting your child at toilet time. If you are anxious your child could pick up on this and associate negative feelings with toileting.

- Use visual supports which help to break down the task and create predictability. Consider using visuals which show the order in which the process should be completed. Make sure any visual prompts are accessible by displaying them at eye level.
- Create a toileting routine to help facilitate understanding of when they need to go to the toilet / potty: Share this routine with other key professionals involved with your child so they also provide consistency. Use our toileting routine checklist for support with creating a routine.
- Be prepared: Make sure you have enough spare clothes and changes of underwear. Does your child need an adapted toilet seat, footstool, or a potty?
- Use praise and rewards where appropriate, but also be aware of over reliance on praise and rewards. Some children may respond well to tangible objects like sticker charts, others will like verbal praise. Remember that for some children praise can be difficult to manage.
- Consider communication: In order to be successful, it is important to ensure your child has an appropriate way of communicating their toileting needs. Examples of this include PECS, Makaton.
- Make toilet training fun: Your child could decorate their own potty, or you could read stories together or sing while they're using the toilet / potty.
- Could you use a transition object when moving from the potty to the toilet? This could be stickers or a seat cover.
- Consider clothing as this can be a barrier to independence. You may want to try elasticated clothes or easy buttons.
- Consider the bathroom environment: It may help to complete our Bathroom Checklist to ensure the bathroom is a visually calm and relaxing environment.
- Give your child the right level of prompting: Your child may need verbal or visual prompts throughout the day as a reminder to use the toilet / potty. Using the toilet / potty more regularly can also help your child to become used to it. Once your child is becoming independent with toilet training try and decrease verbal prompts, so they do not become reliant on this. Another idea for a prompt is an alarm clock.

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- Read story books or watch videos together that feature toilet training: Our parents recommend 'Mr Poo Goes to Poo Land' story book and also 'Toms Toilet Triumph', on YouTube.
 - Encourage your child to have a comfort object or toy that they use on the toilet / potty. Sometimes having something to hold can be useful in keeping your child relaxed and distracted. Consider using the same object or toy exclusively for use just when your child is on the toilet / potty, so they associate this object with the toilet / potty.
 - Keep a food and drinks diary: This can help identify potential triggers to reoccurring cases of constipation or loose poos.
 - Buy a portable potty.
 - If you have more than one toilet in the house, consider using the one furthest away as much as possible to get your child used to delays.
 - Consider sensory implications: Your child may love the feeling of their nappy being wet and warm, some would hate this.
 - Teach your child a sign for wee, poo or toilet: Sometimes if your child gets a sudden urge and they panic they may be unable to verbally communicate their, need for the toilet so having a sign can be a quicker way to do this. This can also be useful if your child is pre-verbal.