

Frequently Asked Questions about Toilet Training

What age should I start toilet training my child?

This is a really common question we hear from our parents / carers. The EYFS states that a child should start to show signs or have an awareness of their bowel movements between 18-26 months and should be independent in their toileting needs by around 30-50 months. However, for autistic children it may be more important to focus on your child's developmental age rather than chronological age.

Remember that every child is different and embracing that fact is important, as it can be very easy to compare your child to others. Ultimately, you know your child best and it all comes down to when you think your child is showing signs of readiness. Starting too early could make your child resent the potty or become distressed by it.

How do I know when my child is ready to start toilet training?

It can be difficult to know when to start toilet training but there is no set time. Following your child's lead is best. Most importantly, your child needs to be physically able to control their bladder and bowel to be ready for potty training. It is also important to start potty training at a time when there are no other distractions, emotional upheavals or changes in your child's life as this can affect the success of toilet training.

Your child will also need to be able to understand basic instructions about using the potty or toilet to be ready to start. Some other signs your child is ready are:

- Staying dry most of the time
- Recognising when they are about to have a wee or a poo

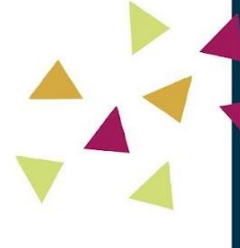
If you start toilet training it is best to continue with it and be consistent until your child has got it, unless it is causing too much distress. It is important to note that some parents of autistic children miss out the potty stage and go straight to using the toilet.

How should I react if my child has an accident?

Having several accidents during toilet training is to be expected. Staying positive and being encouraging during this time is the best way to support your child. Positive reinforcement can work effectively for some during toilet training; but for others this will be ineffective.

Why has my child conquered weeing on the potty but not pooing?

This is actually a very common problem when it comes to potty training. Pooing can cause a lot of anxiety for your child. If you are able to, try and find out exactly what it is that your child is scared of or worried about, once you know what it is it will be easier to find ways to overcome this. If pooing causes your child anxiety it could mean that they begin to repress the urge to poo, this



would usually give them an upset tummy which will in turn make them associate the upset stomach to pooing, therefore, adding to their anxiety even more.

As hard as it may be, try your best to avoid your child becoming constipated during potty training. Giving your child lots of fibre, fruit and vegetables during this time will help make pooing easier. There are also stories available online. Our favourite is 'When Poo Goes to Poo Land.'

Also, when your child has a poo in their nappy / pull-up empty it into their potty / toilet to show them where it is supposed to go.

Why does my child play with their poo?

There could be many reasons why your child plays with their poo, some of these include:

- Seeking sensory stimuli
- For attention- it could be that the first time they did it they got a reaction that they enjoyed. They may now engage in the same behaviour to try and recreate the same reaction,
- They are seeking control over themselves and the environment.

To help discourage your child from doing this create a visual story around going to the toilet, including why we need to do it and how. Explain what happens to the poo once it's gone.

All in one suits are great to use during potty training if your child is interested in their poo as they make it more difficult for your child to physically get to it. If the smearing is a sensory-seeking behaviour give the child other opportunities that will create the same sensation but in a more appropriate way. Some ideas are playdough, shaving foam, gloop, finger painting, sand, mud and slime.

