

Toilet Training Information Sheet



The information in this sheet has been taken from *Practical Parenting - Potty Training*, By Jane Gilbert (2003) And *Building Bridges through Sensory Integration*, By Ellen Yack (2002)

When teaching a child to toilet train it should be remembered that every child is different and that while some children are ready to start toilet training early others take much longer. Some children learn the skill quickly while others take much longer. There are many factors that need to be considered when deciding on when to start toilet training.

The Right Time:

Stages of Toilet Training

1. The child becomes aware of having a wet nappy or clothing
2. The child recognises when he is doing a wee or a poo
3. The child is able to tell you in advance that he will need to go to the toilet
4. The child gains more control of his bladder and can 'hold on' for a while

Physical Maturity

The child needs to have the physical ability to voluntarily control the muscles of the bladder before toilet training will be successful. The child also needs to have the ability to recognise the sensation of having a full bladder and the sensation of wet vs dry clothing.

Recognising the signs:

The child may show some of the following signs to indicate that he/she is ready to start to learn to toilet train. Not all of these indicators are required prior to starting toilet training.

- The child shows the desire to be independent
- He has regular, formed bowel movements

- He has the dressing ability to pull his pants up and down
- He has a drier nappy for longer
- He can follow simple instructions
- He starts to recognise the sensations that he needs to go to the toilet
- He becomes uncomfortable or complains when his nappy is dirty

Toilet Preparation:

The toilet training process begins long before the child sits on the toilet with the nappy off.

Learning through imitation

- It is never too early to start - give the child the opportunity to flush the toilet, or encourage them to start to wipe from front to back and put the toilet paper in the toilet.
- A doll or a teddy could demonstrate what the toilet is for - try using a doll that 'wees' to demonstrate this.



Toilet Tips

- Follow the leader - take the child to the toilet when other children go
- Ensure the toilet aperture is not too big for the child - this can be intimidating and result in a fear of using the toilet. Commercial ring reducers can be purchased
- Give the child a step to help them get onto the toilet
- Aim for consistency - it is important that the same structure and techniques used to toilet train the child are used at school and at home.
- The child should be provided with several changes of clothing.
- The use of social stories regarding toileting behaviour may be successful with some children (depending on their communication skills)

Nappies off:

1. Start by taking the child to the toilet and sitting him on it without his nappy/pullup for a short time regularly through the day. After a meal is a good time to try this because the bowel is often stimulated to pass a motion when the stomach is distended after food, so the chances of 'catching something' in the toilet is greater.
2. If the child is not happy to sit on the toilet you could entice him to sit a little longer by looking at pictures on the wall together.
3. If he does not do anything in the toilet let him know that he has done well to sit and try to use the toilet.
4. When he is wearing pants and does not make it in time do not scold him, simply clean it up and tell him that next time it would be brilliant if he could let you know if he needs the toilet. By doing this you are not responding negatively but



are alerting him to the fact that he has just done a wee - this will help to develop his awareness of bladder fullness and emptying

5. Gradually increase the time the child wears pants rather than nappies.
6. Ask the child or take the child to the toilet regularly to remind him that he needs to go to the toilet.

The Top 10 Mistakes and How to Avoid Them:

1. **Losing your cool** - children pick up non-verbal messages. Try to make sure the message is that toileting is a natural process and that accidents are not the end of the world
2. **Working to your own timetable** - don't rush the child into toilet training, they need to be physically ready before the process starts.
3. **Making them sit on the toilet to hours** - it is tempting to sit the child on the toilet until they do something, rather let him sit there for as long as he is comfortable - you can read a story or look at pictures on the wall to try to encourage him to sit still for longer
4. **Nagging** - do not ask him if he needs the toilet every few minutes but rather leave longer periods between your prompts to use the toilet (e.g. ask every 15 - 20 minutes especially after meals)
5. **Being inconsistent** - the child requires consistency and should be given the same message every time. This needs to be decided between the parents and the school.
6. **Going over the top** - encouraging the child to use the toilet is important but be careful that they child does not start giving 'false alarms' for the sake of attention seeking or just to get out of the classroom.
7. **Cutting down fluid intake** - even if the child is wetting frequently it is important to keep fluid level up to maintain hydration and prevent constipation.
8. **Starting too soon** - only start toilet training when the child is physically ready
9. **Putting it off** - if the child is aware of weeing or pooing it is sensible to start toilet training, if you ignore these signs he may start to ignore the signals his body is giving him.
10. **Never Surrendering**

Children with Special Needs:

Toilet training can be a challenge for children with sensory integration difficulties. Successful toilet training requires receiving and interpreting the sensory information that signals a full bladder or the need to have a bowel movement. The child must form the motor plan to get to the bathroom and then must conquer the sensory challenges of the bathroom.

Toilet training is one of the tasks of childhood that can reflect stress, and a child can exercise a great deal of control by controlling toileting. Try not to enter a battle of

wills on the issue. Things tend to run much smoother without stress and expectations. If you experience set backs with the child, know that this is absolutely normal. That the pressure off and go back at it after some time has passed. The bowel and bladder are smooth muscles, and the sensory signals they send up to the brain to indicate a full bladder or bowel are like soft whispers in comparison to the messages received by striated muscles (e.g. the arm or the leg)

Sensory Strategies

1. At home: If your child doesn't seem to be aware that he is urinating, let him go naked - he will see when he urinates and connect the sensation with the consequence
2. If the child wears nappies, draw attention to information from other senses, such as smell and added weight of the wet diaper (cloth diapers may provide more sensory feedback than disposable nappies)
3. If the child is sensitive to toilet paper use moist toilet wipes
4. If the child cannot tolerate sitting on the toilet, try to make it as safe as possible.
 - Make use of a ring reducer
 - Put a stool under the child's feet
 - Provide hand rail to hold onto
 - Use distractions like pictures on the walls
 - Try a padded toilet seat because it is softer and warmer
5. If the visual input is too stimulating, turn off or dim the lights
6. If the noise is too much, place sound absorbing towels in the bathroom, music or running water
7. With searing of faeces, try a bathroom routine with a caregiver present and start a program of strong smells
8. Never force, respect the child's tolerance
9. Diaper changes may be difficult if the child is uncomfortable with movement, try changing the child while he stands.
10. Use visual aids or social stories to increase the child's understanding of the task
11. Try make the task as pleasant as possible
12. Structure and toileting routine that is the same at home and at school.

