

Home Strategies for Toilet Training

Tips for Parents of Children Age 2 to 5 Years

Readiness for Toilet Training

- Assess your own readiness – do you have the time and energy to provide patient and consistent teaching to your child?
- It is best to wait until your child is at least 24 months old (or at a 24 month developmental level) before beginning toilet training. Children over 24 months of age are more easily and quickly trained than children under this age.
- To toilet train successfully, ensure that the child has physical bladder and bowel control, the ability to remove and replace clothing or indicate the need for assistance, and the ability to follow simple directions.
- Delay bladder training until the child is uncomfortable about daytime wetting, has bowel control, and can hold urine for several hours.

Preparation and Demonstration

- Before beginning toilet training, gradually teach the child readiness skills such as dressing. Teach the child to follow one-stage and two-stage directions and teach appropriate language about toileting.
- If possible, have the child occasionally accompany you to the bathroom. The child can learn much by observing and imitating you. Use your own preferred toileting vocabulary to describe the elimination process. The child will begin to associate his own elimination process with the appropriate location.
- Keep toilet training directions simple. This will greatly enhance the child's chances of learning.
- Set toilet training goals that can be achieved within a reasonable amount of time.

How to Train

- Keep a positive and relaxed attitude. This is the best approach to toilet teaching your child.
- Make it as convenient as possible to use potty when and where the child might need to. For example, put the potty chair on the kitchen floor during basic training. If your child requires specialized equipment in order to sit on a toilet (i.e. commode, harness, armrests, etc.), consult with an occupational therapist.
- To train the child to have a regular pattern of elimination, place the child on the potty for toileting at set times, such as when the child first wakes up.

- Notice when the child typically has bowel movements. Use that as a guideline for toileting times at first. After the child has had some success at toileting and seems motivated to toilet alone, let the child choose toileting times.
- Begin by leading the child gently into the bathroom. Stay with the child and show approval for each time the child tries to cooperate. Praise behavior such as accepting being placed on the potty chair, urinating or defecating into the toilet, getting off the potty chair, dressing, and washing hands.
- If, when sitting on the potty, the child has not had any success within 5 minutes, wipe the child, praise the child for sitting quietly and appropriately, and ask the child to get off the potty.
- Help the child only when the child needs it. It may take longer to accomplish the task, but it is the best way for a child to really learn.
- Act as if you expect the child to behave correctly. Give one simple direction at a time and wait for the child to respond at his own rate.
- Try to keep the training process as pleasant as possible for both the child and yourself. Physical punishment has no place in the training process. Punishment does not teach, and the resulting negative consequences create conflict between parents and child.
- Advise your child's teachers and other caregivers about how you are toilet training your child and ask them to provide consistent instruction to limit the child's confusion and promote success.

Accidents Happen...

- Ignore accidents but help the child get cleaned up. Accidents are to be expected during toilet training.
- In toilet training the child, avoid ignoring or punishing the child's lack of bladder control.

Rewarding Your Child

- Praise the child for appropriate toileting to help motivate him.
- Watch for and reward each step the child makes in positive, natural and spontaneous ways.
- Positive reinforcement, such as praise and acknowledgement, are powerful and durable in helping to increase positive behaviors. Other forms of reinforcement such as a small treat may be useful but are not necessary.