



Positive Parenting of Toddlers

Toilet Training

Like most parents, you may be looking forward to the day when your child no longer needs nappies. Toilet training can seem a big task, especially when relatives, friends, neighbours and books all offer different advice. Relax, your child will learn to use the toilet when they are ready. This tip sheet gives some suggestions on how to recognise when your toddler is ready and how to start toilet training.

Most children will be fully day trained somewhere between two and a half and four years of age and night trained by eight years. Try not to rush toilet training. Your child cannot be forced to go to the toilet. Children who refuse to sit on the potty or toilet may not be ready for toilet training. Nagging or punishing your child will not work.

When Is My Child Ready for Toilet Training?

Start toilet training when your child shows signs that they are ready. Your child may be ready for toilet training when they can do the following things:

- Tell you when they are wet or soiled, or want to go to the toilet.
- Wait, or control the urge to wet or soil.
- Show an interest in the toilet—or a desire to not wet or soil nappies.
- Undress—or at least pull their own pants down.

Other signs that the timing is right include soaking rather than dampening their nappies, longer dry periods between wets, regular bowel movements that are passed easily, and general good health. Do not start toilet training while your child is unwell.

How Long Does Toilet Training Take?

Learning to use the toilet takes time. Once toilet training starts, it can take three to four weeks before children are mostly dry, but some children may take several months. Many children still accidentally wet or soil their pants a year or more after training begins. All children are different, don't worry if your child is faster or slower than others.



It is easier to learn to urinate than to pass a bowel movement in the toilet. Many children who are dry during the day wait until their nappy is on during naps before they pass a bowel movement. This is normal and should not be a cause for concern.

If your child is in day care, toilet training may take a little longer. Check which methods of toilet training your child's daytime carers use. Explain your own methods, and work together.

How To Prepare for Toilet Training

Get Everything You Need Ready

You can use a potty or the toilet for training. If you use the toilet, get a toilet seat ring—so your child won't be frightened of falling in. Provide support under your child's feet, such as a stable step.

Help Your Child Get Ready

Here are some tips to help you prepare your child for toilet training:

- Put your child in pants. The feeling of wet pants may help your child realise when they are wet. Towelling trainer pants can be helpful here.
- Talk about the potty and what it is for and let your child play and sit on it.
- We all learn by watching others. If you are happy to do so, let your child follow you into the bathroom to see the steps you go through when using the toilet. Talk to them about what you are doing.

Find Out Your Child's Pattern

Take note of the times of the day when your child usually wets or passes bowel movements. You will be able to sit your child on the toilet at these times when you start training. They will soon associate feelings of a full bladder or bowel with using the toilet. If your child does not show a regular pattern, or wets often, they may not be ready for toilet training.

Stop Using Nappies (Except When Sleeping)

Nappies are a sign that it's okay to wet or pass a bowel movement anytime, anywhere. Once you start toilet training, nappies should only be used when your child is sleeping.

Dress Your Child in Clothes That Are Easy To Get Off and On

Loose clothing—without too many fasteners and buttons—will make it easier for your child to go to the toilet without help.

Training Steps

Choose a Day To Begin

You must be ready to start toilet training too. This means being able to be consistent and follow the same toileting routine every day. You cannot do it one day but not the next. To concentrate on starting toilet training, set aside half a day when you will be home. It is best to start when the whole family is relaxed and not under extra stress.

Explain How To Use the Toilet

Tell your child the steps to follow when they want to go to the toilet. The steps may include:

- Tell Mummy or Daddy.
- Go to the bathroom.
- Take off your pants.
- Sit on the toilet.
- Try to do a *wee* or a *poo*.
- Wipe yourself (or ask for help to wipe).
- Flush the toilet.
- Wash your hands.

Give Your Child Plenty To Drink

Always ensure that your child drinks plenty of fluids. On the first day of training you may like to provide extra drinks to increase the chance of wanting to go to the toilet. Do not force your child to drink more than they want. Help keep bowel movements soft by making sure your child has plenty of fruit and fibre in their diet.

Give Lots of Praise

Praise your child for any steps they follow and any progress they make. Tell your child what that have done well—*Martin, well done for telling me when you need to go to the toilet.*

Ask Your Child if They Need To Go

If your child does not tell you when they need the toilet, ask them from time to time. Watch for signs like holding themselves, pulling a face or straining to pass a bowel movement. Remind your child of the steps to follow when they need to go to the toilet.

Sit Your Child on the Toilet

When you think your child may need to go, sit them on the toilet for three to five minutes. The best times to do this include:

- When you see signs that your child may need to go.
- After waking in the morning.
- After meals.
- Before going out.
- When returning home.

Do not force your child to sit on the toilet. If your child does not want to sit, leave it at that. You are simply showing your child the steps for when they are ready to take them up.

If your child sits regularly, is relaxed, and encouraged, they will eventually do something in the toilet. Make a fuss with praise and attention. You may like to reward your child with a special activity such as a story or phone call to someone special, or other rewards such as stickers or stamps.

Allow time for your child to admire what they have done and enjoy your attention, then remind them to flush the toilet. Wait at least two hours before taking your child to the toilet again, unless they ask to go sooner.

When your child sits for three to five minutes but does not do anything in the toilet, praise them for sitting. Remind them of the toileting steps and let them get back to playing.

Teach Your Child To Wash Their Hands

Its important that your child learns good hygiene from the start. After every use of the potty or toilet, they should wash their hands. You may need to remind and help them to do this at first. Praise cooperation.

Handle Accidental Wetting or Soiling Calmly

When your child accidentally wets or soils their pants, calmly say *Oops, you're wet. Let's change.* Go to the bathroom and help your child clean up. Stay calm and do not punish your child. Do not talk a lot or make cleaning up a fun time for your child. A few minutes after changing, remind your child of the toileting steps.

Gradually Reduce Praise and Rewards

Once your child has started to learn the steps, wait until they have completed several steps before giving any praise. When your child has continued success at completing all the steps, stop giving rewards. Praise your child from time to time for following the toileting steps.

Tips for Boys and Girls

When learning to urinate in the toilet, it may be helpful to encourage boys to sit down first. If they start off by standing they may be less likely to want to sit on the toilet at all. After all, it's fun to spray the back of the toilet and make sounds with the spray. Once sitting on the toilet has been mastered, Dad or an older brother may show how to urinate while standing.

When teaching girls to wipe themselves after passing a bowel movement, the correct method is to wipe from front to back to help prevent infections.

Tips To Help Prevent Accidents

Toilet training is a learning process and there are times when children accidentally wet or soil their pants. Sometimes children will wet their pants straight after getting off the toilet. Sometimes they will do some in the toilet and more in their pants soon after. This is normal and indicates that you are catching your child at the right time and they are starting to learn.

Here are some more hints to help prevent accidents:

- Make sure your child can easily reach the potty or toilet.
- Ask your child if they want to go to the toilet during long play periods and before outings.
- Encourage your child to go to the toilet while you are out.
- Keep nappies on at night until your child usually stays dry until morning.
- Ask your child to sit on the toilet just before going to bed.

Children may accidentally wet or soil their pants when they are sick or when their usual routine is disrupted. Events such as being separated from the family, the arrival of a new baby or moving house can disrupt a child's routine and cause stress. If this happens, have a break from toilet training. Start again with sitting on the potty or toilet when everything has returned to normal.

Key Steps

- Remember, when your child is ready they *will* learn to use the toilet.
- Use a potty or a toilet with a seat ring and a step.
- Explain the toileting steps.
- Sit your child on the potty or toilet.
- Do not insist if your child refuses to use the toilet.
- Make a fuss of success with praise, attention and rewards.
- Handle accidental wetting or soiling calmly.
- If toilet training becomes upsetting, wait for a few weeks and try again.

Another Suggestion

To demonstrate toileting steps here is another suggestion you can try:

Set up a fun game where your child can help a doll or teddy-bear learn to go to the toilet:

- Go through the steps that dolly follows when she wants to go to the toilet.
- Praise dolly for following the steps.

Next, let your child pretend to be dolly:

- Ask your child what do they do, for example, *What should you do when you want to go to the toilet, or What comes next?*
- If your child does not know, remind them.
- Help your child complete the step if necessary.
- Praise cooperation and success at each step.

See the booklet 'Positive Parenting' for more information. If you have any questions or have tried these strategies and are concerned about your child's progress, contact the centre where you were given this tip sheet.



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