

Potty training is a gradual process to help children to learn toileting as a self-help skill. This includes recognizing the urge to go to the toilet, acting on that urge, removing their clothing, re-dressing, and washing their hands afterwards.

GETTING STARTED:

- Is your child ready?
 - At least 18 months old
 - Dry diapers at least 2 hours at a time
 - Recognize that he/ she has a soiled diaper on their own
 - Indicate discomfort in a soiled diaper
 - Can sit upright for at least 5 minutes
 - Can undress enough to sit on the toilet
 - Can get himself/ herself to the toilet on their own
 - Follow simple directions
 - Answer simple yes/ no questions
 - Imitate others
 - Trust adults and feel comfortable with them
 - Show pride/ enjoyment/ joy at learning new things
- Are you ready?
 - Committed to spending the time each time
 - Have a plan/ knowledge about it
 - Discussed potty training approaches with your child's teacher
 - All adults on board
 - Consistent practices
 - Prepare for accidents
 - Prepare your child

DOING IT:

- Set the potty schedule for the first 5 days
- Do not ask. Say: "Let's go potty!"
- Practice undressing and redressing
- Use underwear at awake times
- Clean soiled underwear immediately. Be okay with accidents
- Have all adults take turns
- Always follow the same steps, whether he/ she 'goes' or not
- Boys: put a square of toilet paper in the toilet bowl. This helps them to aim.
- Avoid having your child watch you use the toilet
- Use a potty seat if the child is fearful
- Teach children to wipe

DON'TS:

- Avoid using pull-ups
- Push, push, push
- Don't get upset at accidents
- Clothing with complicated buttons, zippers, bits and pieces make it harder for the children
- No rewards other than praise and a recognition of how much better they may feel

THE WEEKEND METHOD

To give your potty-training efforts a quick start (or boost, if you've already started) try this method. It's pretty intense and requires the whole family to participate, but can have great results!

Step One: The Week Before

A week or so before the selected weekend, start talking with your child about learning how to use the toilet, read some books about it, practice undressing and dressing for bathroom use, and generally becoming familiar with toilet use and the associated vocabulary. Also, purchase at least seven pair of underwear and have your child start wearing them *over* their diapers for this week. This will help in practicing the dressing aspect of toileting. You will also need a timer that your child can handle.

Once you have selected your weekend, *do not plan any outings or anything that could disrupt the schedule*. STAY HOME! (It will be worth it!)

Step Two: The Weekend

- Friday after work. As soon as you get home with your child, announce that toilet training is starting. Remove their diaper; sit them on the toilet to have a first attempt. Get dressed again, but only place your child in underwear now. *No diaper*. Have your child set the timer for **15 minutes**. Remind them that when the timer goes off, it's potty time! (**Do not ask**, "Do you have to go potty?"). When the timer goes off say, "*It's potty time, let's go sit on the toilet*". Go through the whole process, and once they are dressed again, set the timer for another 15 minutes, and repeat the process. When your child actually does pee/ poop in the toilet, give lots of praise and acknowledgement for a job well done. (**Avoid prizes, stickers or charts**). Be prepared for accidents along the way. Have clean underwear ready, clean up and change your child, have him/ her sit on the toilet (just for practice), and reset the timer. Continue in this manner until bedtime. Then place him/ her in a diaper for sleep.
- Saturday. You are going to continue this timed toileting all day. Upon waking, place your child on the toilet, and continue for the next **two hours** with 15-minute increments. Then extend that to **25 minutes for the rest of the day**. *Replace the diaper only for naps and nighttime sleep*. Have all the adults in the house take turns in taking your child to the bathroom. Each of you must agree on exactly the same process and expectations. This helps your child learn the toilet behaviors in a consistent way.
- Sunday. Same procedure as Saturday. Start the day with **two hours** of 25 minute increments, and then **extend to 40 minutes**. This is usually enough time to take a car ride (to preschool, or the store), so working on training your child within that time frame is really helpful for Monday morning. *Replace the diaper only for naps and nighttime sleep*.
- Monday. Start the day on the toilet, and **dress in underwear, no diapers**. To prepare for the car ride to school, you might consider covering the car seat in a garbage bag, in case of an accident, and have a change of clothes ready. Have your child go to the toilet **before leaving**, and immediately **upon arriving** at your destination. Talk to your child's teacher about your efforts this weekend and request that he/ she continues to take your child to the restroom at regular intervals *not more than one hour apart*.

The Subsequent Weeks & Night Time

- Weekday evenings. Once home, follow the same process you have done the whole weekend, keeping the intervals to **30 minutes or so** for the remainder of the week. Diapers are still going to be needed for naps and nighttime sleep.
- Night time and sleep is a bit more challenging and will happen more slowly, and mostly on its own. You can start to limit liquids about 90 minutes before bedtime to support a less full bladder throughout the night.

But remember – if your child is too resistant (meltdowns, temper tantrums, aggression) then you may need to stop, and try again on another weekend. This is a sign they are not ready, and may need more than a week of lead in time. Avoid saying things like, "only babies wear diapers" or "you're a big boy now, you need to go potty". These phrases don't help and may actually hinder your efforts, especially if your child has a stubborn streak, or has a younger sibling still in diapers.