

## Toilet Training Tips

There is no set age that children learn to use the toilet. Most typically developing children will begin toilet training between the ages of 2 and 4, however the time it takes to be fully toilet trained will vary among all children (ranging from a couple weeks to 6 months or more). Night time dryness often takes much longer to achieve than staying dry during the day, often up to 7 years of age or older.

There are four general steps for both bowel and bladder training:

1. Getting ready to toilet train
2. Trip training – where the adult takes the child either on a routine based schedule, based on the child's body cues, or at set times (for example every 1.5 hours).
3. Self-initiation – When the child is able to take themselves on their own
4. Night time training

There are no real prerequisites for toilet training, other than your child being able to physically sit long enough to use the toilet. Skills that can make training easier, **but are by no means necessary**, include your child:

- being able to stay dry for at least 30 minutes
- disliking being wet or dirty
- understanding language around toileting
- having the physical skills to pull their pants up and down



Things you can do to help your child be successful with toileting:

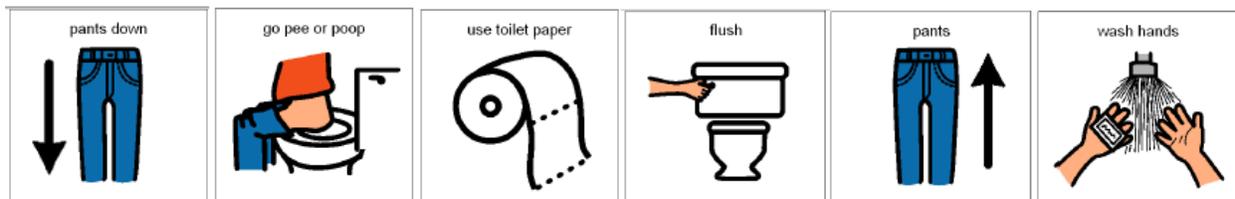
- Praise your child's efforts. If they sit on the toilet but do not void, praise them for trying.
- Model to your child. Show them how you use the bathroom and invite them to come along.
- Ensure that the bathroom is set up for them when they are ready. This could include a small child sized potty or a reducer ring on the toilet and a foot stool for their feet to be supported on.
- Try and do diaper changes or accident clean up's in the bathroom with your child standing beside the toilet (if possible). Have your child assist you with cleaning and start incorporating toileting routines into the clean-up, such as having your child

pull down and up their pants, put the wipes in the toilet, flush the toilet and wash their hands.

- If your child enjoys books, you could consider reading books about toileting to them or have books in the bathroom they could read when sitting on the toilet (fully clothed or not) to increase their comfort with the toilet.
- Decide if you would like to use a reward system or not. Rewards can be beneficial in helping children to learn and understand what you are asking them to do. You could choose anything that is motivating for the child (a sticker, stamp, treat, story, special toy, etc.) as long as it is not available at other times. Rewards work best when given immediately after the child is successful on the toilet.
- When you are taking your child to the toilet (part of trip training) “Tell, don’t ask” your child when it is time to go. By asking, you give your child the option to say no – which often they will as they don’t want to stop playing to use the toilet.
- Be consistent with whatever method of toilet training you choose to use. It is okay to focus on toileting in one environment only.

As with learning any new skill, kids will have up days and down days. Accidents happen, especially when children are sick, going through changes in their life, or very involved in play. Sometimes younger children will use the toilet well for a period of time and then regress to accidents and diapers for a while, before re-learning to use the toilet again. This is a normal part of the toileting process. If a child is struggling or refusing to use the toilet, it can be beneficial to take a break from training for a few weeks or months until your child is showing that they are ready to start again.

Sometimes, kids benefit from having a visual schedule of the steps involved in toileting to help them to learn the process. This could look something like the one below or could involve more or less steps, depending on your child’s needs and understanding.



ERIC, The Children's Bowel & Bladder Charity has several great resources on various topics related to children’s potty training, night time bed wetting, and bowel and bladder challenges <https://www.eric.org.uk/guides-to-childrens-bowel-and-bladder-problems>

#### When to ask for help or refer to an Occupational Therapist?

- If your child is 3 ½ or older and is not toilet trained, or is not making progress *despite consistent trying* for 3 months
- If your child has been urine trained for 3 months and is not yet bowel trained
- If your child has a known developmental delay or difference and you would like help adapting toilet training to their needs and abilities

**Resources:**

1. <https://www.actcommunity.ca/education/videos/toilet-training-for-everyone>
2. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/toilet-learning>
3. Wheeler, M. (2007). Toilet training for individuals with Autism and other developmental issues. Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.
4. <https://www.eric.org.uk/guides-to-childrens-bowel-and-bladder-problems>