

Toilet Training Tips

According to many experts, toilet training can be a major milestone in your child's development. Do not worry! There are many great toilet training tips in this pamphlet to help you and your child achieve toilet training success!

The four key tools for successful toilet training are: **being consistent, becoming empowered, avoiding mixed messages, and teaching your child to become self-sufficient.**

Consistency: Basically, this tool requires you, the caregiver, to stick to the plan (toilet training) and keep regularity during the process.

Empowerment: This tool helps encourage your child, with your support, to become independent.

Mixed messaging: This is the most powerful tool that you, and only you, can control. Conveying the same message is the key to achieving toilet training success.

Self-sufficient: This tool overlaps with empowerment. Autonomy is one of the key objectives for children to learn and achieve in their lifetime.

To help you understand them further, throughout this pamphlet, these tools will be described.

How old should my child be when he begins toilet training?

Each child is different! The greatest window for opportunity in toilet training is anytime between age 2 and 2 1/2 years. Studies have shown that boys generally learn at the latter end of this range. However, do not begin training until you give your child the proper tools to use or your child shows signs that he is ready.

My child is old enough, but how do I know if he is ready and what tools will be needed to begin toilet training?

Here are some signs to look for and common tools to use as you prepare to toilet train:

Your child...

- can pull his pants up and down. Oversized, elastic waist clothing is best to **empower** your child to become **self-sufficient** with pulling up and down his clothing.
- can dress and undress himself. Have your child pick out his own clothing, or play with easy dress-up outfits to help aid in becoming **self-sufficient.**

- knows that he has urinated or had a bowel movement.
- knows that he *is* urinating or having a bowel movement.
- knows that he is about to urinate or have a bowel movement.
- stays dry between 2 and 3 hours.
- asks to wear underwear (let your child pick out his own oversized underwear).
- can easily understand and follow simple directions as in, “It is time to go to the potty/bathroom.”
- has regular and predictable urination or bowel movements. Bathroom time schedules assist with **consistency** for your child.
- understands common bathroom words such as “pee-pee, poo-poo.”
- imitates bathroom movements seen from other members of the family.
- watches you on the toilet and asks questions.
- likes and wants to do things by himself.

When should I start the toilet training process?

Consistency is the foundation of the toilet training process. It is best to begin at a time when you can designate, and spend, at least two weeks in training. In addition, find a time when there are no major family distractions, big changes, or events ahead in his life.

Spring and summer months make toilet training easier because the child wears fewer clothes that can be easily removed. Even if you do not start in the summer, it is important to remember to use oversized elastic waist clothing to make it easier for your child to pull clothes up and down. Also, remember that it is best to eliminate obstacles like belts, hard to do buttons, and overalls until your child has mastered training. These actions will help to **empower** your child to become **self-sufficient**.

How can I prepare my child for the toilet training experience?

Below are some tools to implement *before* the window of opportunity for toilet training (2 to 2 1/2 years old) has passed.

Make the toilet training experience your number one priority.

This holds true when you have the physical and emotional energy to begin.

Try to clear your schedule before training.

Select a time to begin toilet training when your family’s daily routine is least likely to be disturbed. Try to stay away from times when your family might be: moving, having a new sibling, going on vacation, or having houseguests. Keeping toilet training **consistent** will benefit you and your child.

Choose bathroom words cautiously.

Decide what words you will use to describe body parts, urine, and bowel movements. Avoid using words like “yucky,” “smelly,” “dirty,” or “naughty” to describe human waste to your child. These negative terms can make your child feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. Treat urination and bowel movements in a simple, straightforward manner.

Explain the way the toilet is used.

At the beginning, explain to your child that it is time to put his “pee-pee” and “poo-poo” in the potty. Tell your child that when he feels the need to go, he needs to hold it just long enough to walk to the potty and sit down. Then he can let it go.

Talk about the advantages of being potty trained.

Discuss training as an important stage in growing up.

Use your child’s dolls or action figures.

Sit your child’s favorite doll or action figure on a pretend toilet explaining, “The baby is going pee-pee in the potty.” You can even put diapers on his favorite stuffed animal or action figure and then have it graduate to underwear.

Introduce a potty book or video.

Show your child books and videos about toilet training so he can see other children learning to use the potty. These materials are available and can be found online or in your local bookstore.

You and your child can pick a potty day.

Get a calendar and ask your child when he wants to begin to learn how to use the potty. Your child can help by using a bright marker and/or sticker to circle the date. Keep reminding him that “potty day” is almost here.

How do I begin to establish a daytime routine?**Make frequent visits to the bathroom.**

This is where **consistency** is crucial. In the early stages of toilet training, children will rely on Mom and Dad to remind them to use the potty. Keywords like, “It is time for your body to try.” work well. Have your child sit on the potty for 2 to 4 minutes every hour. It is best to schedule these trips to the bathroom close to times your child usually urinates or has a bowel movement, such as after a meal or a nap. Remember that you cannot force your child to urinate or have a bowel movement, but you can encourage him to practice using the potty.

Time

If your child cannot urinate or produce a bowel movement after 2 to 4 minutes, it is time to try later.

Learning from you and others

Children are interested in their family's bathroom activities. It is sometimes helpful to let children watch parents and older brothers and sisters when they go to the bathroom. Seeing these people use the toilet makes the younger children want to try to do the same.

Relocation of the potty

In the beginning, it is best to keep the potty chair in the room where your child usually plays. Easy access to the potty will greatly increase the chance that he will use it. This **empowers** your child to become **self-sufficient** in using the potty. You may even consider owning two potty chairs, one for the play area and one for the bathroom.

Expect some fooling around.

Your child may be curious and try to play with the feces. You can prevent this without making him feel upset by simply saying, "No. This is not something to be played with." Children often test their parents. Keep the communication with your child in a positive and matter-of-fact manner. Take action using a non-judgmental technique. Make your child aware that it's time to clean up. Hand your child baby wipes and assist in the clean-up.

How can I keep my child dry throughout the night?**Bed or crib**

In successful toilet training, a bed is the best option to **empower** your child to "go potty" in the middle of the night and to help keep up with toilet training. Cribs give **mixed-messages** to the child and make the process of going to the potty hard for him.

Mixed-messages during toilet training also include the use of such things as bottles, binkies, and diapers.

Too dark

Keeping the bathroom light on during the night helps the child see where the potty is. A nightlight or a flashlight that the child can use to get to the bathroom also **empower** him to use the potty.

Keep bedtime calm.

Research shows the risk of bedwetting can be increased if your child engages in rough housing or even an exciting television program close to bedtime. When children are excited they tend to produce more urine. Keep him calm by having a quiet conversation or reading a story together.

One last potty try

Before your child goes to bed, have him try to go to the bathroom one more time. Even if he says he does not have to go, try anyway. Your child might SAY one thing but when he sits on the potty, he GOES!

- It is a good idea to let your child drink only in moderation after 6:00 p.m. Giving your child increments of 1 ounce of water after 6:00 p.m., instead of the 8 ounces or more, will relieve accidents.
- Turning on the water faucet also helps him urinate.

Consider not using training pants or diapers at night.

Although you did not intend to, by continuing to put your child in training pants or diapers at bedtime and expecting him not to have “accidents,” you may have been sending him *mixed-messages*. If you feel the need to use training pants, calling them “nighttime underwear” is best.

Be prepared for unexpected nightly visits.

While your child gets used to underwear at night, he may have an accident. It is common for children to wet their beds at night even when they are 7-8 years old. Please do not be discouraged!

- It is best to be prepared. Use a waterproof pad for the child’s bed to help with nighttime accidents.
- If it is necessary, change the sheets, help your child change his clothes, try bathroom again, and kiss him goodnight. It is best to have spare sheets near or under his bed in case accidents happen.
- Remember, if you have any questions, you should consult with your health care provider to rule out any physical problems.

Can I toilet train while traveling?

The ideal situation is not to travel during toilet training. However, below are some tools to use if your family requires travel during toilet training.

Empty the bladder before leaving home.

Do not forget to have your child empty his bladder before you leave home.

Take the fundamentals.

If you are driving a long distance, take along his potty (little bladders need frequent stops). It is also a good idea to carry wipes or extra tissue to use in bathrooms that are short on supplies or when no bathrooms are found. Waterproof pads can also be placed in the car where your child sits.

First things first

When you arrive at your destination look for the bathrooms. This is extremely important because you may find yourself having to unexpectedly rush your child to the toilet.

Which bathroom is best?

Public bathrooms range in size, quality, and cleanliness. Unfortunately, we cannot control cleanliness but we may be able to control size. The best stall to use for toilet training is the one for people with disabilities. You will have the extra room you need however, remember the seat may be elevated and your child will need more help from you.

Germs everywhere

As an added barrier of protection if toilet seat liners are not available, teach your child how to line public toilets with strips of toilet paper.

Always be cautious.

Always accompany your child into public restrooms.

Pack other accessories.

To cover mattresses, pack a waterproof pad or sheet, small plastic tablecloth, or heavy plastic trash bag.

Diet, diet, diet

A family vacation is a time when a child's change in diet is likely to cause a change in bowel habits. It can be either constipation or diarrhea and may cause a subsequent crash in the training progress.

Accidents will happen.

Do not be shocked or upset if your child begins to have numerous accidents. Revert to training pants while you travel and then you can continue training, or retraining, when you get back home. Calling them "travel or away pants" is best in this situation. *Reminder:* The ideal situation is not to travel during toilet training.

How can I make sure I do not over praise during the toilet training process?

Simplicity

Whether your child goes to the potty or not, if he tries, praise him with a simple "Good for you." Try showing affection by giving him a big hug or clap your hands.

Congratulate your child for staying dry.

It is helpful to check his pants every hour or so and let him know how great it is that he stayed dry.

Be a positive role model.

During the toilet training process, remember to recognize and show your appreciation for all the things that your child does right. Focusing on the things children forget to do, or have not done perfectly will diminish what you have already accomplished. For example, if children wash their hands but forget to flush, parents should congratulate them on their nice, clean hands.

Offer rewards

Modify the reward system to fit your child's needs and personality. Occasionally, if your child seems to be having difficulty moving ahead, try giving him a prize such as a bright sticker or a tasty treat. When your child collects a certain number of stickers, you could give him a surprise.

Remember:

- Time spent with you, "special time" is the ultimate prize for both of you.
- Be careful not to give rewards for each potty use or your child might expect them. If you are unsure about what will work as an incentive, ask your child what he would like as a reward.
- As your child's visits to the bathroom become routine, gradually phase out the rewards.
- Keep in mind that rewards do not always work.

How can I teach my child to maintain good hygiene?**Change soiled underwear or training pants.**

It's okay to wait a short time to change your child's soiled underwear (depending on severity) after he has tried to wipe himself. He may feel as if he has failed if you change him right after he has used the potty. You can encourage him to "keep wiping" and when he is done, you can say "great job."

Teach your child to wipe.

Girls should wipe thoroughly from front to back to prevent carrying germs from the rectum to the vagina. Teach your little girl to go "pat, pat, pat" instead of wiping hard. This will help eliminate irritation or possible rashes.

Encourage your child to wipe the seat.

Teach your child to wipe the toilet seat with toilet paper since germs can be sprayed from the toilet flushing process and settle on the seat. Teach your son to lift the toilet seat when urinating.

Buy the right toiletries.

Buy products that are gentle on children's extra sensitive skin but also are strong and absorbent. For example, pre-moistened wipes are ideal for young users because they gently and effectively clean children's delicate skin while providing the strength and absorbency to accomplish the task.

Show your child how to wash his hands.

Research shows hand washing and other hygiene practices reduce the spread of disease. Show your child how to wash his hands. Singing the "Happy Birthday" song is an ideal length of time to wash hands or you can teach your child to count to ten or say a rhyme while he washes his hands. Even if your child did not use the potty, the routine of hand washing should be done during each bathroom visit.

Always close the lid.

To avoid contact with germs that might spray up, children need repeated reminders to close the toilet lid before flushing.

My child just won't go to the bathroom. Why? What can I do?**Just ask your child.**

Sometimes misunderstandings or real fears stand in the way of successful toilet training. You may try just asking your child why he will not use the toilet.

Running water

In early toilet training, some parents find it helpful to try turning on the water faucet in the bathroom to stimulate urination.

Targets in the toilet

This tip works best for boys. Many parents put objects in the toilet so boys have something to aim for. Creative, inexpensive, and biodegradable targets can include Cheerios, Fruit Loops, and squares of toilet paper with "bulls-eyes" drawn on them.

Soften the stool naturally.

If your child begins holding in his stool, it can become hard and very uncomfortable. Dietary changes can naturally help soften the stool.

- Try increasing the fiber in your child's diet. Some foods that may help are broccoli, dried peas, peas, sweet corn, bagels, muffins, brown rice, baked beans, whole-grain pastas, and wholemeal bread.
- Dried fruits (apricots, dates, prunes, and raisins), blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, oranges, and prunes can be mashed and disguised as necessary.
- Increasing clear liquid intake will help prevent stools from becoming too dry and hard.
- Remember: Excessive milk intake can lead to constipation.

Keep a record.

Keep a record or log of your child's daytime urination and bowel movements. When visiting your pediatrician, show this record to him.

Consult a pediatrician.

The best advice is, if you have any concerns before, during, or after toilet training, talk with your pediatrician! Often the problem is minor and can be resolved quickly, but sometimes physical or emotional causes will require treatment. Your pediatrician's help, advice, and encouragement can help make toilet training easier. In addition, your pediatrician is trained to identify and manage problems that are more serious.

Seek advice and support.

Talk to other parents about their successes and failures. You can also go to online discussion boards, post a message, ask a question, and exchange information about toilet training.

Final Words of Encouragement:

- ❖ The time it takes to toilet train your toddler may vary. Just remember that children are different and will train at their own pace.
- ❖ Your biggest goal to remember is the use of four key tools: **consistency, empowerment, mixed messaging, and** teaching your child to become **self-sufficient**. The use of these tools is key to helping your child succeed with this milestone. Accomplishing this will help foster growth for the rest of his life.