

Top Tips for Toilet Training

Make Sure Your Child is Ready

Starting toilet training prematurely can be stressful for both parents and toddlers so it's important to make sure your child is ready. Key signs of readiness include: knowing the difference between wet and dry (or dirty and clean), identifying the sensations that accompany a bowel movement or urination, and being aware of needing to go *before* the event.

If you're concerned your child doesn't know the difference between wet and dry, trial underpants instead of nappies. It means cleaning up toileting messes, but it will help your child to distinguish wet and dry.

Stay Neutral

Your toddler will have toileting accidents over the course of their toilet training. Do not punish your child for accidents. Punishment will create anxiety around toilet training. If your child has an accident calmly say "I bet next time we can do a poo in the toilet!"

Create a Toilet Routine

Encourage your child to sit on the toilet regularly throughout the day. For how long depends on your child's attention span. Try to encourage sitting for at least 30-seconds. If there's been no activity after 5-mins praise your child for sitting and take them off the toilet.

If you're unsure when to encourage your child to sit on the toilet keep a toileting journal for a week or two before starting. Note down the times of day your child voids in the context of their daily routine and use these times as sitting times. As a general rule, encourage sitting before leaving and when returning home, as well as after food times.

Make Sitting Fun

The trick to encouraging sitting is making it fun. Put together a box of special books that you can read to your child while they sit on the toilet. Games and toys can also encourage sitting so long as they don't interfere with sitting. If your child refuses to sit on the toilet don't force the issue. Leave it and try again in a few weeks. Try to not show your frustration – this will increase your child's resistance.

Have Realistic Expectations

Some toddlers respond quickly to toilet training whereas others take several months. Be realistic and prepared for the fact that it may take a few months for your child to master toilet training.

Praise Positive Toilet Behaviour

When your child sits on the toilet offer lots of praise (regardless of whether or not they actually go). If your child does void in the toilet, offer huge praise and a small treat – stickers, a food treat, etc.

Toilet Training

Learning to use the toilet is a significant milestone in toddlerhood. Some toddlers will learn this skill quickly, but others will take a while to get the hang of it.

Parents can feel immense pressure to have their toddler toilet trained by a certain age, but toddlers will learn to use the toilet in their own time. Pressuring toddlers to sit on the toilet will delay rather than aid toilet training.

Starting toilet training before your child is ready can lead to problems later down the track. As a general rule, few toddlers will be ready for toilet training before 18 months.

On average, toddlers will show signs of readiness somewhere between 2 and 2½ years. These signs are:

- Can walk and sit for short periods
- Can independently complete some tasks
- Can keep a nappy dry for at least 2 hrs
- Can notify you of a dirty nappy
- Can follow simple instructions
- Can pull undies on and off
- Starting to dislike wearing a nappy

This tips sheet covers basic strategies for toddler toilet training. It's normal for kids to take a few months to get the hang of toileting, but if you're concerned speak to your GP about a referral to a child clinical psychologist.

A clinical psychologist can provide you with additional strategies for toileting.