

Toilet Training

Bowel and bladder control are necessary social skills. Helping your child develop these skills through toilet training takes time, understanding, and patience. Our goal is to give you information that will help guide you and your child through this stage of social development.

The first and most important rule is **not to rush your child** into using the toilet. A child must be ready.

When is a child ready for toilet training?



There is no set age at which toilet training should begin. The right time depends on your child's physical and psychological readiness. A child younger than 12 months has no control over bladder or bowel movements and little control for 6 months or so thereafter. Between 18 and 24 months, a child can start to show signs of being ready, but some children are not ready until 30 months or older.

Your child must be able to control the muscles that regulate the bowel and bladder to be toilet trained. Knowing how to get to the potty or toilet and then undress quickly also is important.

In addition, your child must be emotionally ready. He or she needs to be willing and cooperative, not fighting or showing signs of fear. If your child protests vigorously, it is best to wait for a while.

Things that cause stress in the home may overwhelm the effort to learn this important new skill. Sometimes it is a good idea to **delay toilet training in the following situations:**

- The family has just moved or will move soon.
- A new baby has arrived or is due soon.
- There's a recent family illness, death, or other crisis.

Try to avoid a power struggle over toilet training. Children at the toilet-training age are becoming aware of their individuality and look for ways to assert independence. Some children demonstrate their power by holding back bowel movements.

Your best approach is to treat toilet training in a relaxed manner and to avoid becoming upset. Remember that no one can control when and where a child will urinate or have a bowel movement except the child. Your goal is to teach your child appropriate behavior that he or she can master as a part of growing up.

Look for any of the following **signs that your child is ready** to begin training:

- He (she) remains dry at least 2 hours at a time during the day or is dry after naps.
- Bowel movements become regular and predictable.
- Facial expressions, posture, or words reveal that a bowel movement or urination is about to occur.
- Your child can follow simple verbal instructions.
- Your child can walk to and from the bathroom, undress, and then dress again.
- Your child seems uncomfortable with soiled diapers and wants to be changed.
- Your child asks to use the toilet or potty chair.
- Your child asks to wear grown-up underwear.

How to teach your child to use the toilet

Step 1:

You should decide carefully what words you use to describe body parts, urine, and bowel movements. Remember that friends, neighbors, teachers, and other caregivers also will hear these words. It is best to use proper terms that will not confuse or embarrass your child or others.

Avoid using words like "dirty," "naughty," or "stinky" to describe waste products. These negative terms can make your child feel ashamed and self-conscious. Treat bowel movements and urination in a simple, matter-of-fact manner.

Step 2:

Once you have decided to begin to toilet train your child, you should select a potty chair. A potty chair is easier for a small child to use, because there is no problem getting onto it and a child's feet can reach the floor, making pushing easier.

Children are often interested in their family's bathroom activities. It's sometimes helpful to let children watch parents when they go to the bathroom. Seeing grown-ups use the toilet gives children a strong incentive to do the same. If possible, mothers should show the correct skills to their daughters, and fathers to their sons. Children can also learn these skills from older brothers and sisters.