

Voice of the parents toilet training guide

When is best to start toilet training?

- Children are physical ready around 24-30 months although some may be ready earlier or later than this, its important not to feel pressured due to age
- It is best to start when a child shows cues of physical **and** emotional readiness
- Physical development cannot be rushed; increase of bladder capacity happens between 2 & 4 years
- It can take weeks or months to fully train, each child is dfferent
- Try not to put off training until home life has calmed down (does is ever?) and don't feel pressure to start before your child is ready either. Always watch and go with your child.

Key points to remember whilst toilet training your child

- Keep consistent at home and any other place of care i.e. nursery, grandparents, and baby sitters.
- Do not over prompt; this can stop the learning for the child and cause them to stop listening to their bodies urges (once every hour is more than enough)
- Keep positive throughout
- Do not dwell on accidents they are key to learning when toilet training
- Be confident and don't give up

Confidence consistency compassion

Stick to these three words throughout the training

Happy tips

- Let your child choose their own pants, take them shopping and give them ownership
- Let your child choose a potty or seat that they feel comfortable sitting on,
- Allow your child to choose where they want their potty to be, buy a step to aid with using the big toilet and hand washing
- Avoid pull ups and wear potty friendly clothing

Problems that may arise during the training

- The child may regress or begin to refuse, this is common (there are some tips on this problem below)
- The child leaves going to the toilet till the last minute, this may because they are so engrossed in something else and don't want to leave the activity, just talk to them about their body telling them that they need to go so they can learn for themselves

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Common myths busted and questions answered...

Potty-training readiness myths – we often mistake the following signs that children are ready for potty training, but often these are just normal behaviours of developmental stages children need to pass through:

- A child telling you they have done a wee or a poo, or while they're doing it. Potty training is about the knowing before they have done anything. (This awareness is a good start but it is too early to jump straight into full training)
- Taking their nappy off (often this is due to being curious and is a fun challenge)
- Following you to the toilet (is usually linked more to separation anxiety)
- Hating nappy changes

What cues should I look for?

There are many signs to watch out for but there is no need for your child to show all of them. If you can match one or two signs from the list with an appropriate potty training age you have a high chance of success:

- Hiding to poo
- Physical ability to pull clothing up and down
- Nappy remains dry for a period of two hours or more
- An ability to communicate verbally
- An ability to follow instructions
- Requesting a nappy change

What if my child has accidents whilst training?

Please remember accidents are key for the child to learn about the concept of toilet training; here is why:

- Its teaches them the new sensation of weeing without a nappy on.
- It helps them understand how long they can leave it until they go toilet.
- Teaches them what happens when they don't make it to the toilet on time.
- It does not mean the training isn't working.

What can you say to your child when they have accidents...

“Did you feel that wee was about to come, that's your body saying, quick time to go potty/toilet”

“Oops, you didn't make it on time, can you see the wee on the floor? That's what we are trying to get into the potty”

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- Don't place too much attention on the accident, your child will watch how you react and if they see you are anxious or stressed this may have a negative affect and make them want to avoid the training all together.
- It may seem draining cleaning up and changing your child lots of times but it is only a small hurdle in the final outcome of them learning to use the toilet effectively.

What should I do about nursery, going out etc. whilst training?

- Continuity is key in the first few days, we would recommend between three and seven days with the same adult at home to maximise success. When this is not possible a second adult with a strong attachment to the child and using the same methodology will help.
- You really should aim to stay at home for the first two days, when you go out on the third day, take a potty with you.
- Consistency is key, if your child is wearing pants at home they need to wear these at nursery/out too, putting the child in a pull up will dent their confidence and show you don't trust them.
- Use the same approach at home to nursery and when out this will stop any confusion or stress for your child.
- Send one consistent message of "I believe in you!"
- Tell nursery in advance and set a time aside to chat to keyworker, this will help nursery to ensure continuity and give you the opportunity to discuss any concerns. The parent's area can be booked and telephone appointments are also available. Please avoid discussing the introduction of toilet training at drop off and pick up times as these are about settling the child and whilst staff are in ratio it is hard to give you the support they would like to. Training will be taken on by one core member of staff who has the strongest relationship with your child (usually the key worker).
- Be conscious not to discuss in front of the child unless the child is part of the conversation and has a strong voice in the discussion.

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Potty friendly Clothes; what should my child wear?

It is best to avoid trousers with zips, tights, leggings, dungarees and belts. Instead opt for baggy trousers/ shorts, tops that are waist length, short A-line dresses (twirly skirts aren't good), leg warmers, long socks. In the first few days at home being naked from the waist down supports children to concentrate solely on toileting, adding clothing gradually will make the process less daunting. For example, day one naked, day two naked but offering pants, day three pants on, day four pants and trousers.

Rewards for potty training:

We regularly see an abundance of rewards being offered to children throughout toilet training. However, there is no need to reward them with anything more than verbal praise. Rewards pose too many risks; firstly children may learn to override their bodily sensations to receive a treat (which is totally counterproductive to the process of potty training), and secondly, rewards undermine intrinsic (internal) motivation in children. This means that when the reward is removed, the child is less likely to repeat the behaviour because they never made the choice to do it in the first place.

Rewards, and especially punishment have no place in a mindful, informed and gentle approach to potty training. If rewards or punishment need to be used, it means that the time is not right. Once the child is ready – in body and mind – no incentives or indeed disincentives, are needed.

What verbal praise should we use?

Too much praise and praise that is superficial and shallow are known to dent intrinsic motivation. Empty praise such as “good boy” or “clever girl” can be timed wrong and outcome focused. Try to use descriptive praise based on effort. Here are some examples:

Effort-based praise: “I guess you didn't need a poo, after all, but sitting there waiting for a poo was a great idea”

Specific praise: “I saw that you took yourself to the potty when you needed a wee. That made me really proud that you listened to your body.”

Descriptive praise: “Wow, that's a big poo. I can see some sweetcorn you had for dinner yesterday in it, can you?”

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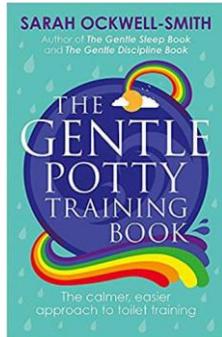
What if my child refuses or regresses in their training?

Refusals and regression can often happen a few days after training begins here are some reasons why and solutions to the problem

| Reason why | Solution |
|--|---|
| The excitement has worn off, they realise there is more work involved in it than at first | Keep the excitement up, lots of praise for effort, looking at books and conversations about potty training with your child can help too, but remember to offer lots of other things they enjoy. Learning a new skill can be draining and they will need time to play and think about other things they enjoy. |
| The child can become stressed or scared by accidents, or the reaction you may have to the accidents | Keep a positive attitude, if you feel stressed or come across negative your child will pick up on these emotions and it may put them off the training. |
| Over prompting the child may result in them withholding because of the constant reminding | Stop over prompting or really reduce it, the child needs to know you trust them to learn and have control over it themselves. Rather than directly asking "do you need the toilet?" Wait for signs and say "it looks like you might need to sit on the toilet, can I support you?" |
| An inconsistency, this could be between home and nursery or by using underwear then nappies when out and about | Devote time to the training, ideally 3 days minimum at home otherwise it really shouldn't start, it is such a huge moment in their lives that deserves one to one time and attention to achieve it. |
| A new addition to the family such as a baby is a very common cause for regression | Remain compassionate and empathetic, the accidents gives them the sole attention for a few minutes with baby around, remember even negative attention is better than none. Set aside regular one to one time with your child and the stage will pass. |
| Physical causes such as UTI and constipation | If there are no emotional changes and the child is having accidents coupled with traditional illness signs then take a trip to your GP to rule out any infections or other problems. |

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Further advice and reading:



As you can see potty training is a big subject. As a team we have enjoyed researching and creating this handy guide but would really recommend reading around the subject. Our most recommend book is Sarah Ockwell-Smith's gentle potty training book. A nursery copy is available on the parent's library. If it is out on loan please email and we can arrange another copy for you. Kindle edition is also available.

What time line should we expect?

What is my child's bladder capacity?

| Age of child | Bladder capacity |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Six months | 85ml |
| Twelve months | 115ml |
| Eighteen months | 142ml |
| Two years | 200ml |
| Three years | 213ml |
| Four years | 227ml |
| Adult | 455ml |

IS YOUR CHILD READY TO POTTY TRAIN?

LOOK FOR AT LEAST THREE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- HIDING TO POO**
 Your child is reluctant to poo in front of you or others
- TELLING YOU BEFORE THEY GO**
 Your child sometimes tells you that they need to go potty BEFORE they start going (not during, or after)
- UNDRESSING WITHOUT HELP**
 Your child can take off their elasticated waist pants and underwear without your help
- COMMUNICATION SKILLS**
 Your child is able to tell, sign or indicate their basic bodily needs to you, e.g they are hungry, thirsty, tired, hot or cold
- DIAPER DODGING**
 Your child refuses to wear a diaper, or asks to stop using them

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Day 1 | most on the floor, not in the potty (bare-bottomed) |
| Day 2 | a 60/40 floor/potty ratio (bare-bottomed) |
| Day 3 | a 50/50 floor/potty ratio (underwear and possibly clothing introduced here) |
| Day 4 | floor/potty ratio moving towards 40/60 |
| Day 5 | floor/potty ratio moving towards 30/70 |
| Day 6 | floor/potty ratio moving towards 20/80 |
| Days 7-14 | floor/potty ratio moving towards 10/90 |

What is Gentle Parenting?

POSITIVE - DISCIPLINE: NO PUNISHMENT, BRIBERY OR SHAMING

AWARENESS - OF PARENTAL ACTIONS, HOW OUR BEHAVIOUR AFFECTS OUR CHILDREN

RESPONSIVE - TO THE NEEDS, EMOTIONAL & PHYSICAL OF CHILDREN

EMPATHY - UNDERSTANDING HOW CHILDREN FEEL AND THE REASONS BEHIND THEIR BEHAVIOUR

NORMAL - NOT TOO HIGH, EXPECTATIONS OF CHILDREN AND THEIR CAPABILITIES

TEACHING AND GUIDING, ACTING AS A ROLE MODEL FOR CHILDREN TO FOLLOW

INFORMED - UNDERSTANDING THE LATEST NEUROSCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY TO MAKE INFORMED PARENTING DECISIONS.

NON-VIOLENT - RAISING CHILDREN WITH PEACE AND CONNECTION, NOT FORCE AND FEAR.

GROWING - INDEPENDENCE AND CONFIDENCE, BY ALLOWING CHILDREN NORMAL DEPENDENCE IN THE EARLY YEARS

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If you could draw potty training success in a chart, it would look like this...

