

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO POTTY TRAINING

At what age should I try potty training?

Toddlers are generally physically and mentally ready for potty training at 24 months, however, some toddlers are not ready until 4 years of age. Many parents find that boys are slower to adapt to life without nappies than girls. This can, of course, depend on where the boy is in sibling hierarchy and what sort of boy you have. Those busy, action boys who don't sit still for 2 minutes are often unaware of what their body is doing whereas a quiet child who sits and plays will often be more sensitive to what is going on.

When should I start potty training?

It's much easier to try potty training during the Summer months, if possible, as your child can easily wear just a skirt or loose shorts or run around in the garden with nothing on. The first thing to do is to look for the signs that your child is ready. You should never force the issue because the timing suits you, this will put the training back further if you force your child when they are not ready.

These are a few signs to look for (you do not need all of them to start the training):

- Your toddler will begin to show signs of independence e.g. dressing themselves
- Questions/interest will develop around you using the toilet
- A dislike of wearing a dirty nappy
- Your toddler will start to tell you when they are urinating or having a bowel movement.

When should I wait?

Probably the major factor to consider is "what else is going on in the family?". You should choose a time when you can have some routine, when you are not over worked and when you can remain calm!

Try and avoid times of upheaval for your child such as:

- The arrival of a new baby in the family
- Starting a new childcare arrangement
- Moving from a cot to a bed
- Moving house
- Family relationship problems

Should I use pants or training pants?

Training pants are convenient and avoid unfortunate accidents on the floor, however, some children simply treat these as nappies and, therefore, we suggest that in most cases children wear pants.

Allowing the child to help choose pants with their favourite characters on can also make the process more special.

Some tips to help with daytime potty training

- Buy a potty a few weeks before you plan for your child to use it; keep it in the bathroom next to the toilet - have a potty in each toilet if possible
- Never force your child to sit on the potty
- Don't rush things - sometimes if you start teaching later, it takes less time
- Try and be consistent so your child knows what is expected
- Expect setbacks on the way to success
- Sit on the toilet yourself whilst your toddler sits on the potty
- If you can persuade them to sit on the potty, then do something with them to help them relax – watch their favourite television programme or read them a book
- Remember to praise your child every time they successfully use the potty/toilet, this will encourage them to do it all the time - give them plenty of praise and tell them how grown up they are and how proud of them you are

- Teach them how to pull down their pants and pull them back up again after using the potty - this process of un-dressing and dressing themselves fosters their feeling of independence and of growing up - dress your toddler in clothes that can be pulled up or down easily; no fiddly buttons, belts or zips
- When out and about with your toddler think about their toilet requirements as often as possible - place them on the toilet before you leave the house -when you arrive at your destination encourage your child to go again and again before you start your journey home - when out and about always remember to take spare clothing as accidents will happen
- Don't be angry with your child if he/she has an accident
- Keep reminding him/her where the potty is – take your child to the toilet every 20/25 minutes and ask him/her to sit and see if anything comes out – praising when something happens.
- Be aware that if you ask your toddler if they need the toilet and they are doing something fun they will probably say 'no' - suggest that they do need the toilet and you would like to take them

Potties and Trainer Seats

When choosing a potty, it needs to be comfortable for your child to sit on and very easy to clean. The potty should not be something to play with, choose one for its simplicity. Training seats can make the “big toilet” a little less daunting for small children but your child will need to get used to sitting on a normal toilet seat in other people's homes and when out and about. A step stool can be very useful to help your child reach both the toilet and the basin to wash their hands.

The yucky bits

Discourage your child from trying to empty their own potty; it will end up on the floor and it's not nice to clean up! Be rigorous about hand washing – squirty soap is always popular with small children. It may be worth having disposable cleaning wipes on hand to wipe the toilet seat as you will invariably have drips.

Nappy-free nights

Once your child is dry during the day it does not mean they will be dry at night. For some children, it happens at the same time but for most they may still require a nappy at night. You may wish to continue using nappies and to monitor how wet they are on the following morning. When the nappy is regularly dry then your child may well be ready to go to bed without the nappy.

It can take a long time and boys are especially slow to be dry at night. You will need to be patient and persevere; it's not unusual to find bed-wetter's aged 7 or 8. Some parents “liff” their child on to the toilet before they themselves go to bed.

- Use a good bed protector and always have a spare to hand
- Use a washable duvet or protect it with a waterproof cover
- Ensure that your child goes to the toilet before going to bed
- Don't give your child a drink before bedtime

If your child is repeatedly having accidents, it is usually an indication that they are not yet ready and potty training should be stopped until a later date.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to speak to your child's key person.