

Questions & Answers about toilet learning

Learning to use the potty is a big event in the lives of preschool children. It's just as important as learning to climb, jump, run, and talk. Children learn this new skill in their own time. Patience and timing are needed for success. Try to stay calm as you train your child. If you force toilet training, you may create a battle for control.

1. How can I know if my child is ready for toilet training?

Children show different signs that they are ready for toilet training. These include:

Physical signs: Children can stay dry for several hours, get on and off the potty chair or toilet seat by themselves, and can pull their pants up and down with little help.

Verbal signs: Children can name different parts of their body and tell parents when they need to use the potty.

Following directions: Children are able to understand and follow directions.

Motivation: Children are willing to cooperate in order to reach this big step in their lives.

2. When are most children toilet trained?

Most children learn to use the toilet between the ages of 2 and 3, although individual children mature at different rates. Girls generally learn toileting a few months earlier than boys.

3. What are the steps to teaching toilet training?

- Watch for signs that your child is ready.
- Read books about potty training to help children understand the process.
- Borrow or buy a potty chair, steps, and/or attachment for the toilet. Place the new potty in the bathroom and tell children what it is for.
- Dress children in easy-to-remove pants to make the job

easier for them.

- Encourage children to sit on the potty for a few minutes. When they succeed, praise them. If they do not succeed, reassure them: *"We'll try again later. If you have the feeling that you need to go, let me know."*

- Remind children to use the potty on a regular basis such as before and after naps, after dinner, and before bedtime. As children become used to the potty, they will use it on their own and need fewer reminders. This may take only a few days but more likely will take several months.

4. Suppose my child is afraid of flushing?

Children often respond to flushing in one of two ways—either they are fascinated by the process or scared. Children who enjoy flushing may enjoy watching everything flush away and may want to repeat the process again and again. Children who fear flushing may prefer their parents do the flushing. Make sure children are off the potty before flushing. Children may need reassurance that they are safe and that only the waste from their bodies will be flushed away.

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5. How should I react to mistakes during training?

Remember that mistakes are a part of the process of learning to use the potty. Give your child your support during the time it takes him or her to learn this important new skill.

Nighttime control generally comes after daytime control, so diapers may still be needed for a while for naps and bedtime. Your child may slip back to his or her old ways during times of stress, such as a moving to a new home or the birth of a new brother or sister.

Sources:

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Nelsen, J., Erwin, C., & Duffy, R. (1998). *Positive discipline: The first three years*. Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing.

Oesterreich, L. (1995). Toilet training. National Network for Child Care. [On-line]. Available: <http://www.nncc.org/Maintitles/info.page.html>.

Toilet learning. (2001). Child Welfare League of America. [On-line]. Available: <http://www.cwla.org/positiveparenting/tipstoilet.html>.

Toilet learning for toddlers. (2000). National Parent Information Network. [On-line]. Available: <http://npin.org/>

Children's Books

The New Potty by Gina Mayer

No More Diapers by J. G. Brooks

Once Upon a Potty by Alona Frankel

Going to the Potty by Fred Rogers

Sam's Potty by Barbro Lindgren

My Potty and I: A Friend in Need by Jan Berenstain

The Potty Time Book by Melissa Tyrrell

Uh Oh! Gotta Go!: Potty Tales from Toddlers by Bob McGrath

Everyone Poops by Taro Gomi

The Princess and the Potty by Wendy Lewison

What Do You Do With A Potty?: An Important Pop-up Book by Marianne Borgardt