

Potty training

Many children find toilet training difficult. Some learn quickly, while others can take longer. It is not uncommon for children to slip back occasionally after they have made good progress. Children learn better when they are not anxious, so although it can be frustrating, especially when out and about, try to keep calm.

When to begin potty training?

All children are different, but a good guide that they are ready to become toilet trained is if they

- Can remain dry and clean for two hours or more
- Are aware when they are emptying their bladder or bowels
- Show an interest in sitting on a potty or toilet
- Have a regular pattern to when they wet or soil their nappy.

Preparing for potty training

- A good way to prepare is to start a toilet chart to see how often your child might need to use the potty. A quick feel of the nappy at regular intervals will tell you if it is wet or soiled
- It may take a week or two before you spot any pattern in the chart. If you do – for example your child's nappy is usually wet between 12 and 2pm – you could try 'catch' that wet nappy by introducing 'potty time' just before that time
- If no pattern emerges, you could start to "try for a wee on the potty" before lunch or bath time
- The traditional routine in nursery and school is for children to be asked to go to the toilet and wash their hands before morning break, lunch time and before the end of the day. This is a good routine to aim for
- Decide whether to start using a potty or to begin directly using the toilet. If you decide to use the toilet, a special seat to reduce the size of the seat may be helpful
- Choose a rewarding activity for you and your child to do while they are sitting on the potty. For example, looking at a book or picture or listening to nursery rhymes or a story CD

When on the potty

- Make sure you have plenty of time and do not rush your child. Give them time, but do not keep them there so long they get bored – ten minutes at the very most
- Talk to your child about what you are doing. For example, say that “we are waiting for a wee-wee”. Games and activities that involve blowing, such as bubbles and whistles, will naturally encourage the stomach pushes needed to go to the toilet
- A running tap might also be helpful
- When your child is successful, use your chosen activity as a reward. For example, give them a new book to read on the potty, or a new picture to pin up on the wall
- Gradually increase how often you have potty time. It is a good idea to start trying two hours before and two hours after a time that seems to be successful.

Using training pants

Training pants are like a nappy with an elasticated waistband. They are less tightfitting than a nappy and are easier for both you and your child to pull up and down. Although many children can move straight from nappies to pants. You can start using training pants at any stage once you have begun potty training. A good time to start is when you have one successful potty time every day.

Other tips

- Children may be more aware that they are wet or soiled if they are wearing pants and loose fitting clothes rather than nappies.
- Remember, all children are different. Some need to use the potty more often than every two hours and others may be able to wait three hours or more but then need to go urgently.
- You will need to rely on your instinct and knowledge of your child to come up with a potty training plan that suits them.