



Home & Dry

ERIC's Guide to Potty Training



Education and Resources
for Improving Childhood Continence

Potty training is an important milestone for your child. Learning to gain control of bowel and bladder movements can be a complicated process and your child needs to be emotionally and physically ready to potty train. Your child will learn to be able to understand and know how to react and respond to the feeling that they need to empty their bladder or bowel. Children learn so much through observing and copying and potty training is no different. This guide provides tips on how to make potty training as smooth as possible for you and your child.

How do I know when to potty train?

Parents can feel pressured to begin potty training their toddlers by nurseries, childminders, grandparents, or even by other parents. It is important not to feel pressurised to start before you and your child are ready. There is no 'right' age to potty train but each child will have their own 'right' time; most children show signs of readiness to potty train between 18 months and 3 years.

Signs of readiness:

- Can manage to stay dry for at least two hours between wet nappies.
- Regular or predictable bowel movements.
- Indicating awareness that a bowel or bladder movement is occurring - perhaps by interrupting what they are doing and concentrating; telling you that they are wet or showing discomfort when the nappy is soiled.

- Able to understand simple instructions such as 'find your potty' or 'wash your hands'.
- Able to sit on and get up from the potty with only a little help.
- Showing a desire to please and cooperate.
- Enjoying praise.
- Showing an interest in others using the toilet and imitating.

How to begin

Try to plan ahead with potty training, ensuring that you avoid too many changes at once and try to choose a time when there are few distracting events so you are prepared and able to commit time. Let your own circumstances dictate when you start. Use your common sense; if your child is going through a resisting 'no', 'can't' or 'won't' stage, then postpone the potty training until that phase is over. Have confidence in your own ability to judge the right time for your child, don't feel pressurised by other people. If your child has other regular carers you will need to let them know that you are starting potty training and try to encourage consistency in your approaches.

Prepare for potty training by deciding terminology – many people call it wee and poo – and then talk to your child about it! Let your child see you on the toilet and show him what you have done. Read stories about potty training and take him shopping to help choose his potty and pants. Decide where the potty will be kept and let him try it out if he wants. Good signs that he's eager and ready to potty train are when he happily talks about sitting on the potty and having a wee or poo – being happy to sit on the potty is a really good start!

Ready for success

Now that you have prepared the groundwork and your child is showing signs of readiness you can begin the potty training. You could try letting your child run around without nappies, for some children this helps them understand what is happening. Nappies will need to be abandoned at some stage but you may wish to try trainer pants as they can be easy to remove. Ensure that your child's clothes are easy to pull up and down without any fiddly fastenings and buttons.

Encourage your child to sit on the potty every couple of hours – not too often or he may become bored; and never force your child to sit if he resists. Don't keep him sitting on the potty for too long – nothing can be gained from sitting for a long time - as a rough guide, sit him on the potty for no longer than two or three minutes. If he gets up and runs away from the potty, stay calm.

A short while after he has had a drink, suggest he could try to do a wee. Try and make the time he's sitting on the potty a special time just for the two of you, perhaps singing favourite rhymes, or reading a book. If he asks for the potty in between, then all the better.



Show pleasure every time your child wees or poos in the potty. Accidents will happen and they are part of the learning process, but if there are lots of accidents and very little progress you may consider going back to nappies and leaving potty training for a while – your child may not be ready.

Be patient, go at your child's own pace; it takes time to toilet train and there will be some frustrations, for some it can be quick but for others it may feel like a long haul. Let your child know what you want but above all be consistent, be positive, provide lots of praise and make your child feel clever and special.

A child can be considered potty trained when they are able to use the potty or toilet fairly independently. This means they know when they want to go and are able to react by using the potty or toilet. Wiping can take a while to master and is quite difficult for most young children, you will need to do this initially – but you can introduce the idea and begin to practice when you feel your child is ready.





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