

Ideas and methods to potty training toddlers

Potty Training...Is Your Child Ready?

Been There! Done That! Toilet Training Tips

By Lisa Julian

Toilet Training should be a fun and exciting experience for both you and your child. Remember, your child should feel in control of the process, not you. Take a slow, casual, matter-of-fact approach, and make it fun!

Always encourage and praise your child.

Do not begin training until your child shows signs that he/she is ready.

Every child is different. Most are ready for potty training between two and two and a half years old (some as young as 18 months or as old as 3 years).

Start at a time when you can spend a lot of time together- when your child is eager to please you and there are no major distractions or traumatic events in his/her life (new sibling, divorce, moving, new caretaker, etc.).

Never pressure or punish your child for unsuccessful attempts at using the potty.

Most of all, be patient! Your child will learn to use the potty when he or she is ready (and not before!).

15 Signs of readiness for potty training

Your child is ready for potty training when he or she:

1. Has bowel movements at about the same time every day
2. Can stay dry for a few hours or wakes up dry from sleep
3. Knows that he/she has to go to the bathroom
4. Understands the association between dry pants and using the potty
5. Can pull her pants up and down
6. Lets you know when he/she has soiled his/her diaper (likes to stay dry)
7. Can follow simple directions like, "let's go to the potty"
8. Understands potty training terms (wet, dry, pee, poop, dirty and potty)
9. Can tell you he/she has to go to the bathroom
10. Imitates other family members
11. Shows interest and asks question while watching you
12. Wants to do things "by myself"
13. Enjoys washing his/her hands (like to be clean)
14. Gets upset if his/her belongings are not in their proper place
15. Wants to please you!

Getting Ready

Start by reading potty training books to your child (15 months and up). Once your child is ready for potty training; you can go to the store and purchase training pants and a potty chair. Bring your child with you so that he/she will get excited about the whole process. When buying training pants, if you are choosing cotton, let your child pick out his/her favorite ones (Rugrats, Batman, Barbie etc.). Cotton training pants will let your child feel the wetness and will train faster. The downside is that they are messier! Disposable training pants are easy for cleanup and on the go but it may take longer to train if your child does not feel the discomfort of wetness. If you buy cotton, buy more than one three pack. You will go through these quickly and you want to have plenty in the diaper bag and dresser. When purchasing a potty-chair, make sure you purchase a sturdy one. You want your child to feel secure when he/she tries it. Your child's feet need to be on the floor (This will eliminate his fear of falling in). You may also want to buy an extra one for outside or to keep in the car (it's better to go to your car and use your clean potty than go to a public restroom that hasn't been sanitized!)

It's Potty Time!

Introduce the potty in a casual way. Put it in a room where your child plays most often. The kitchen is a good place, so you can supervise. It will also encourage your child to use it more often if it is in plain view. Let your child play with it so he/she will get accustomed to it. Then show your child how it works.

At this time you can also put your potty charts on the refrigerator. Explain to your child that each time he/she successfully uses the potty, he/she will get a sticker for his/her chart (use praise too, of course). This will be an incentive to get your child to start using the potty-chair.

Once your child is used to the potty-chair, you can start to encourage use of it. At the beginning of training, increase fluids to encourage practice. Encouraging practice will help your child learn the basic potty skills. In addition, you will want to make sure your child eats lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. Prune and apple juice are always good staples to have around when BM training. You want to keep your child's stools soft to prevent withholding of stools. When you see any signs that your child is about to go (passing gas, wriggling, holding crotch or telling you), quickly tell your child it's time to use the potty. All cooperation with attempts at using the potty should be praised with words like, "What a big boy! Nicolas is using the potty just like daddy"! Also, remember to praise your child and offer a sticker for his/her chart for every successful potty use. This will help build self-esteem.

If you encounter problems

If your child is reluctant or refuses to use the potty, try to encourage him/her by offering to read a story while sitting on the potty. If this still does not work, back off and do not push him/her. You can try to leave your child's diaper off at the time he/she usually has a bowel movement (BM). Timing is an important factor in potty training. If you sense that he/she has to do a BM (gas for instance), take the diaper off right at the moment you see your child getting ready to do his/her BM. If you do catch your child before the BM occurs, then quickly take him/her to the potty and tell him/her that this is where the poop goes. Hopefully if you catch your child at the precise moment, he/she will look for relief and let you guide him/her to the potty. If your child protests a bit, gently encourage and explain to your child "that he/she is a big girl/boy now and mommy and daddy expects you to use the potty".

Remember, **encourage and guide**, but do not force your child to sit. If your child refuses to sit on the potty, then he/she is not ready. If your child pees and poops constantly in his/her underwear, then he/she is not ready for potty training. No big deal, try again in a month or so. This is normal! Let your child take the lead. Your child needs to be in control of the process.

Withholding of Stools

It only takes ONE painful BM to cause your child to be frightened of using the potty, so at all costs, make sure his/her diet has sufficient fresh fruits, vegetables and juice. If your child has a painful BM only once while trying the potty, it could delay potty training for months. He/she will associate painful BMs with the potty and will refuse to use it. If you suspect that your child is withholding his/her stools, it is best to stop potty training and increase the fluids. Always call your pediatrician if you think your

child is withholding. It can be serious if an impaction occurs. Tell your child at that moment, that he/she is not ready yet and that you will try potty training again later.

Continue to play potty videos and read potty-training books often to encourage regular use of the potty so your child will grasp the concept. Keep the potty-chair out and he/she will eventually show signs of interest again.

Remember, the keys to potty training are patience, praise, encouragement (and a sticker on his/her chart to build self esteem and make the learning process fun).

Potty training can get messy so be prepared and expect that there will be many mistakes. Your child is learning a very difficult skill. Clean up any accidents without anger or showing disgust. Do not make negative comments. Explain to your child that pee and poop go in the toilet. You should also empty any accidents in underwear or training pants into the toilet and explain to your child that he/she is a big girl now and this is where the poop goes. Try switching from diapers to training pants when your child does at least fifty percent of his/her urine or bowel movements in the potty. At night, you can use diapers until your child wakes up dry for a couple of days in a row. Remember, they are learning a very difficult skill. No one has ever said, "Toilet training is easy". Make the process fun and you will have happy memories to look back on.

Potty training is enough to drive the most patient of mothers to exasperation. Help is only a few dollars away when you can buy anything from musical potty seats to diapers with colorful shapes that disappear when they get wet. There are so many toilet training products designed to help parents with this right of passage! Remember the basics and see how simple potty training can be.