

Toilet Training Reference Guide

If you have not started toilet learning (or even thought about it!) at home, rest assured, your child has already begun the process at school. In order to give your child, the greatest sense of independence, all diaper changes (other than bowel movements) are done standing up, rather than the child being lifted and placed on a changing table. Children are asked and encouraged to use the toilet at each diaper change/bathroom routine. Every child learns from this routine, whether they are using the toilet, sitting to try, or just observing the children who are further along in the toilet learning process.

Toilet Learning

Studies tell us that "the earlier, the better" is the way to go with toilet learning. The thought behind this is that the older the child gets, the more they strive to have control of, and independence in, their daily lives. Using the toilet, or not, is one of the few things that a toddler can control in day to day living. While this early start may work for some children, it is our experience that there are certain "signs of readiness" that help us determine when to begin toilet learning. Children between the ages of eighteen months to three years are just beginning to put together the concept of "cause and effect" which makes this the perfect window for toilet learning.

Age & Signs of Readiness

The typical age of readiness for girls is two years and for boys the age is two and a half. This is a general guideline which varies from child to child. Fortunately, there are some concrete signs that can help us identify if a child is ready to begin the process of formal toilet learning. Here are some of the signs we look for in order to determine readiness:

1. Waking up from sleep (nap or overnight) with a dry diaper
2. Looking for a private place to have a bowel movement
3. Vocalizing a recognition of feeling the urge to go, or that they are wet
4. The ability to make it to the toilet after vocalizing a need to go
5. Interest in the toilet – Not just flushing it!
6. The ability to pull up and down their own pants with minimal assistance

If you observe that your child is exhibiting all or some of these signs, please speak to your child's teachers to determine how and when to begin the formal process.

Please see the attached frequently asked questions for clarification on our policies and procedures.

FAQ's

Q: What if we are not seeing the signs?

A: As mentioned, the typical age of readiness is two years for girls and two and a half for boys. This is a general benchmark therefore, even children who are not showing signs of readiness in the average age range will generally come around.

Q: When should I send my child to school in underwear?

A: Once you have observed the signs and discussed a timeline with your child's teacher, we recommend at least 2 successful full days at home in underwear before sending your child to school diaper-free. We also strongly recommend that, once you begin the process of toilet learning, you do not revert back to using diapers throughout the day. This can be very confusing to a toddler, and detrimental to their success.

Q: What do we need to bring to school?

A: Please bring the following items:

- 5 pairs of pants
- 5 pairs of underwear
- 5 pairs of socks
- spare shoes (more than just indoor/outdoor)
- 4 shirts
- wipes
- spare splash/snow pants when appropriate

Q: How can I set my child up for success?

A: Every child is different; however below is a list of tips you may find useful.

- Make it a family event! Ensure that all family members are willing and active participants
- Use appropriate names for body parts. This is important for clarity and consistency between home and school.
- Start small. Have your child wear ONLY underwear and use a small potty to start, eventually adding more clothing and moving up to a real toilet (with a potty seat).

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- Try and build a daily routine. Have your child use their potty when they wake in the morning, awake from naps, before and after all meals, before and after excursions and before bed.
 - Choose appropriate clothing. Pants and underwear must be easy to pull up and down. Shirts must be short enough to stay out of the way (especially important if your son is standing). Selecting underwear that your child is excited about may discourage them from soiling them.
 - Reduce liquids consumed especially prior to sleep time. Hydration is important, but overhydration can cause difficulties in success, and setbacks in your child's motivation.
 - Patience, patience, patience. Accidents will happen, try not to get discouraged.

Q: How should I respond to accidents?

A: Toilet learning is linked to the child's self-esteem, so genuine verbal praise is important. Remind yourself that, there are no 'accidents' during toilet learning, only lessons. Try to have a calm, gentle discussion with them about what has happened (they had an accident), how it feels (wet, uncomfortable) and how much better it feels to use the toilet instead. Remember that, until now, their "normal" has been diapers and it will take time to adjust. As much as possible, have them participate in the clean-up. This may mean taking off their soiled clothing, assisting with the "washing" of the clothes (a basin of soap and water works well for this task), cleaning themselves, and redressing.

Q: Should I use pull-ups or diapers at bedtime or outings?

A: We generally discourage pull-ups as we view them as fancy diapers. Neither pull-ups nor diapers give children a clear indication that they are wet as they do in underwear. For this reason, we recommend that, when you do go out, you put the diaper over the underwear so they can still feel the wetness, but your car seat will remain undamaged. In our classroom we use diapers for naptime and would recommend that you do so as well until your child is consistently waking up with a dry diaper.