

Toilet Training for Children with Developmental Delays: Strategies for Success

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Agenda

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3. Using rewards
4. Teaching your child to sit
5. Going potty
6. Dealing with accidents
7. Promoting independence
8. Bowel training
9. Generalization
10. Nighttime toilet training

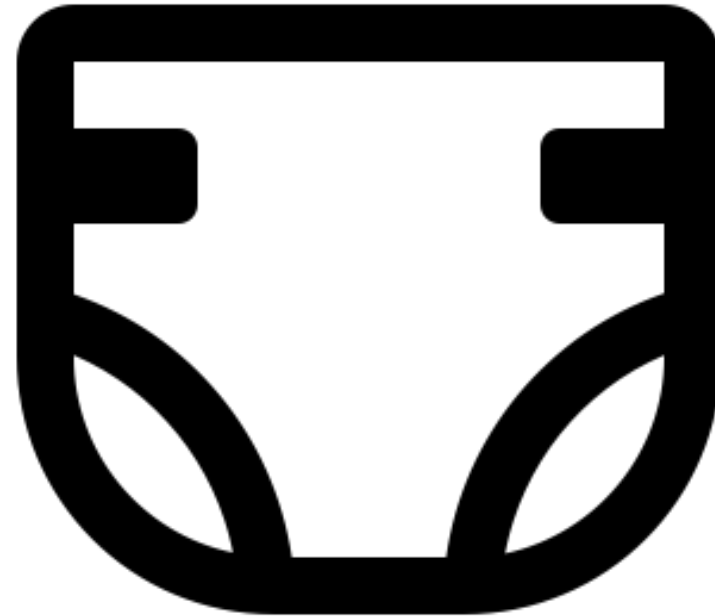
Signs of Readiness

What can make toilet training difficult?

- Routines
- Communication
- Social
- Sensory
- Learning
- Elimination Patterns

“Common” Signs of Readiness

- Child indicates their diaper is wet or soiled
 - Brings a clean diaper to you
 - Removes the soiled diaper
- Child usually remains dry through the night
- Interest in using the toilet or wearing underwear



Signs of Readiness for Children with Developmental Delays

- Developmental age of 18 to 24 months
 - OR chronological age of 4 years with no contributing medical concerns
- Bowel movements are regular/formed
- Remains dry for one to two hours
- Able to follow simple directions, like “sit down”
- Parents are ready to dedicate time and effort!
 - Plan to dedicate at least 3 days to ONLY toilet training!

Preparing for Toilet Training

Consistency

- Toilet training is the most successful when it is consistent!
 - Consistent schedule
 - Same routine each time
- All caregivers should be on board
 - Parents
 - Teachers
 - Therapists
 - Babysitters / Daycare Providers



Language

**Time to go
potty**

**Let's go to the
bathroom**

**It's time to
try to pee**

**It's time to
use the toilet**

- Decide in advance what language to use
 - Toilet, potty, bathroom, pot
 - Urine, pee, wee
 - Bowel movements, BM, poop
- Everyone should use the same words
- Consider what is appropriate when the child is older

Communication

- Determine how your child will ultimately ask to go to the bathroom
 - Sign
 - Picture card
 - Verbal
 - Base this on their current communication skills
- Be sure to have any needed materials readily available
 - Picture cards in all settings!

Clothing

- Make it easy!
 - Loose fitting clothes
 - No snaps or zippers
 - Elastic waists
- Try to teach dressing skills before starting toilet training
- Have many pairs of underwear and clothing ready to go



Supplies for the Bathroom



- Potty chair
- Toilet insert
- Footstool
- Visual timer
- Rewards
- Wet wipes versus toilet paper
- Gloves (for wiping)

Visual Supports

- Many children are visual learners
 - Helps the child to know what is expected
- Introduce outside of the bathroom
 - Initially focus on preferred activities
 - Then gradually include less preferred activities
- Also help to keep caregivers consistent



Issues for Boys

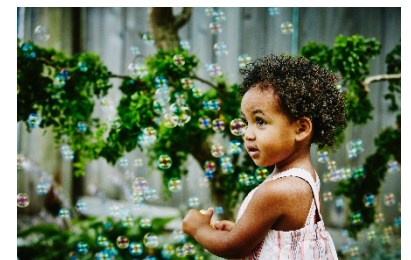
- Sit or stand?
 - Recommend to initially teach to sit
 - Cannot have a bowel movement on the toilet if standing!
 - Once completely toilet trained, then can be taught to stand



Using Rewards

Choosing Rewards

- Pick a powerful reward
 - Something the child really likes
 - Ideally something the child can have while sitting on the toilet
- Snacks, toys, activities
 - Keep relatively small
 - Snack = 1 piece
 - Activity = at most 5 minutes
- Can use different rewards at home, school, daycare, etc.



Pair with Social Praise

**Great job peeing
in the potty!**

**I love how you
went to the
bathroom by
yourself!**

**Wow! You peed in
the toilet!**

**Awesome job
pooping in the
potty!**

- Always pair rewards with praise and attention
 - Tell your child why s/he is getting the reward!
 - Hugs, high-fives, cheering

Accessing the Reward

- ONLY allow the child to access the reward for toileting!
 - If cookies are the reward, the child should not get cookies ANY other way
 - Think about this when choosing the reward
- Clearly define how the reward is earned
 - This will change over the course of toilet training
- Give the reward every time it is earned

Varying Rewards

- Can be helpful to vary rewards
 - Child may get tired of the original reward
 - Can let the child choose what they want from a few options

(Child)'s Choices



Popcorn



Letters &
Numbers



Dinosaurs



Candy

Using Visual Supports

- Helps the child to understand how they earn the reward
 - “First pee on the potty, then chocolate”

FIRST



THEN



Teaching Your Child to Sit

Why is this critical?

- Child needs to be comfortable sitting on the toilet in order to eliminate!
 - Needs to cooperatively sit for at least 2 to 3 minutes
 - Needs to be relaxed
- It's a new skill!
 - It will take practice

Preparing



- Plan to practice sitting on the toilet 6 to 8 times per day
- Practice across settings
 - Home, school, daycare
- Be sure rewards are ready to go and in the bathroom

Practicing

1. “It’s time to sit on the toilet/potty”
 - It’s not a choice – do not ask!
 - Prompt child to make request
2. Take child to bathroom
 - Prompt child to make request again
3. Show first-then visual and/or visual schedule
 - Always verbally explain as well
4. Sit the child on the toilet
 - Prompt through toileting routine (e.g., pull down pants)
5. Set a timer for 5 seconds
6. When the timer goes off, immediately provide:
 - Praise
 - Reward

What if the child won't sit for 5 seconds?

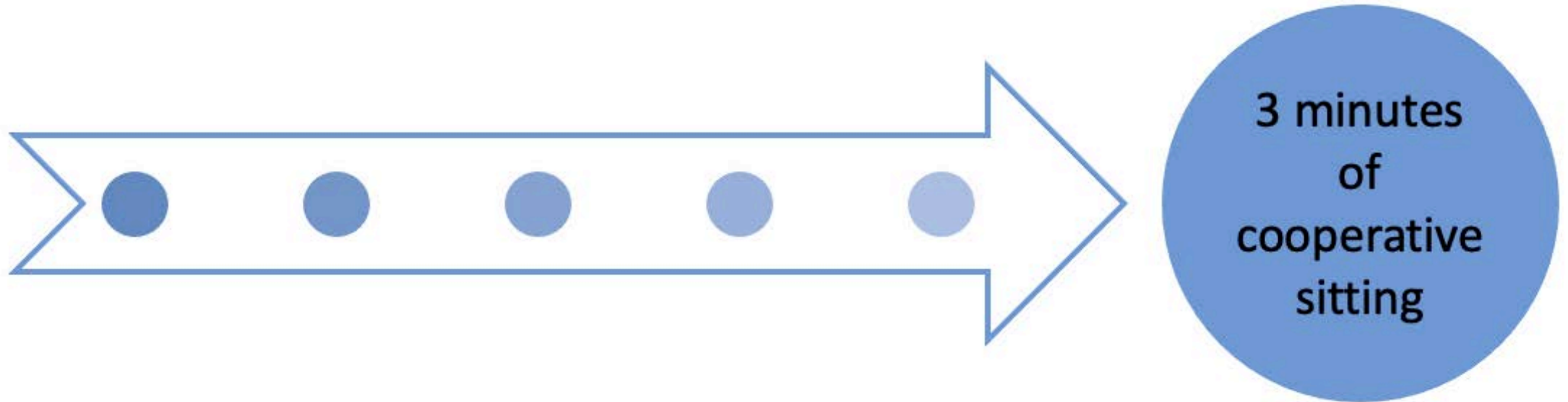
- Start by gently holding your child for the five seconds
 - Then, gradually remove your grasp (inches at a time)
 - Then, stand up but remain near your child
 - Then slowly back away
- It may take several days of practice before your child independently sits for 5 seconds
- NO reward if child is not cooperative!
 - Gets off toilet
 - Excessively cries/screams

Then what?

- Gradually increase the amount of time in 5 to 10 second increments
- Take data to know when to increase!
 - When child is cooperative for 75% of the practice sessions, increase by 5 seconds
 - What does cooperative mean?
 - Sits on the toilet alone until the timer goes off
 - No crying or screaming

Number of Practice Sessions per Day	Number of Cooperative Sessions Needed
8	6
7	5 to 6
6	4

What is the goal?



Going Potty

Using Scheduled Sits

- Once the child cooperatively sits for 3 minutes, the goal is to eliminate on the toilet
 - Achieved through regularly scheduled bathroom trips
 - In underwear full time
 - Allows us to quickly detect accidents
 - Exception: diapers/pull-ups at night and when riding in the car
- Start with taking the child to the bathroom every 30 minutes

Bathroom Trips for Urine

1. “Time to go to the bathroom”
 - Prompt child to make request
2. Take child to bathroom
 - Prompt child to make request again
3. Show first-then visual and/or visual schedule
4. Prompt through toileting routine
5. Set a timer for 3 minutes
 - If child eliminates:
 - Praise
 - Reward
 - Can get up immediately
 - If child does not eliminate:
 - Brief praise for sitting
 - Sits for 3 minutes

Data Collection

	Successes	Accidents	Comments
7:00	U		
7:30			
8:00	U/BM		
8:30		U	Playing on iPad
9:00			
9:30	U		

- Helps us monitor progress
- Lets us know when we can increase the amount of time between sits
 - Success rate of 80% or higher for three days in a row, then increase time between sits by 15 minutes

What if child does not urinate?

- Consistently implement scheduled sits for several days
 - Often, child naturally eliminates and sees that s/he gets a reward
- If not...
 - Make rewards VERY powerful and motivating
 - Gradually increase liquid intake
 - Use warm water prompting
 - More rigorous schedule – 5 minutes on toilet, 10 minutes off toilet

Dealing with Accidents

Accidents

- Accidents will happen!
 - Initially, there is NO consequence for accidents
 - Remain calm, do not scold the child
 - Simply prompt the child to go to the bathroom
 - Complete bathroom routine
 - Change clothes
 - Don't forget about data collection!

Identifying Accidents

- Need to be in underwear full time!
- A Wet-Stop device provides an auditory alarm when a urine accident occurs
 - Quite helpful for nighttime toilet training as well. Here is the wet-stop website:
<https://wetstop.com/>



Correct Positioning of Wet-Stop 3+

- Set alarm to audible, vibrate, or both.
- Attach to sleep top close to ear.
- Position sensor cord BENEATH sleepwear.



- Position sensor clip on underwear where wetness will first occur.
- Avoid contact with skin as sweat will trigger the alarm.

Patented Sensor Clip with Alligator Grip!

Handling Accidents

- Once the child is reliably eliminating on the toilet, you can provide consequences for accidents
 - This is one way to promote self-initiation
 - Child is more motivated to avoid having an accident
- Use Positive Practice when accidents occur

Positive Practice

1. Child has an accident
 2. Guide child to the bathroom
 3. Sit on toilet for 5 seconds
 4. Go back to site of accident
 5. Repeat for a total of 5 times
- Should not be fun!
 - “Remember, pee in the potty”

Promoting Independence

Fading Prompting

- Fade prompts
 - Once child knows toileting routine, stop prompting each step
- Fade yourself out of the bathroom
 - Start by leaving while child is washing hands
 - Gradually leave earlier

Promoting Self-Initiation

- Slowly increase the amount of time between sits based on data collection
- Pair bathroom trips with routine events
 - “Go potty before lunch”
 - “Brush your teeth, then go to the bathroom”
 - Incorporate into visual schedules
- Accept any form of communication as a request!
 - Pulling at pants, dancing around, squatting
- Make sure child knows where the bathroom is in all settings

Wiping



- This is difficult for many children!
- Initially teach outside of the bathroom
 - Get paper towel
 - Wipe counter (sauce, peanut butter)
 - Check paper towel
 - If dirty, throw away
 - Get more paper towel
 - Repeat until paper towel is clean

Wiping, part 2

- Then, teach in the bathroom
- Consider using visual supports
- Use hand-over-hand prompting
 - Gradually fade prompting
- Consider using wet wipes rather than toilet paper
- Consider having child wear disposable gloves
 - Particularly for children who don't like having "messy" hands

Bowel Training

When to start?

- Typically started once the child is initiating using the bathroom for urine
- If child experiences constipation or frequent loose stool, wait before starting bowel training
 - Consult with your pediatrician
 - Bowel movements should be regular and formed

Bathroom Trips for Bowel Movements

- Similar to urine training, schedule regular bathroom trips
 - Use your data collection to determine when your child usually has bowel movements (BM)
 - Prompt to go to the bathroom 15 minutes before BM usually occurs
- Rewards are now given for having BM in the toilet
 - No more rewards for urinating in the toilet, but continue to praise
- If you notice signs of a BM at other times of day, take to the bathroom immediately

Bathroom Trips for Bowel Movements, part 2

1. “Time to go to the bathroom”
 2. Take child to bathroom
 3. Show first-then visual and/or visual schedule
 4. Prompt through toileting routine as needed
 5. Set a timer for 10 minutes
- If child has BM:
 - Praise
 - Reward
 - Can get up immediately
 - If child does not have a BM:
 - Brief praise for sitting
 - Sits for 10 minutes
 - Off for 20 minutes, and then another bathroom trip

What if child does not have a bowel movement?

- Use the most powerful reward you can think of
- Make the bathroom as relaxing as possible for your child
 - Telling the child to “push” may make him less relaxed
- Blow bubbles
 - Engages the abdominal muscles
- If child typically “hides” when having a BM, do not stand in the bathroom with him (monitor from the hallway)

Generalization

Leaving the house

- At some point, you have to take your child out of the house!
 - Initially use diapers/pull-ups for car rides... there is no opportunity to go to the bathroom
- Public bathrooms can be particularly scary
 - Not as comforting as home bathrooms
 - Sounds are louder and different

Gradually introduce public bathrooms

- Initially walk by and briefly look into the bathrooms
 - Can teach child to recognize bathroom signs (men/women)
- Go into the bathroom for a few seconds
- Go into the bathroom to wash hands
- Practice sitting on the toilet (no expectation to eliminate)
 - Bring a toilet insert for small children
- Eliminate on the toilet
 - Use rewards!

Nighttime Toilet Training

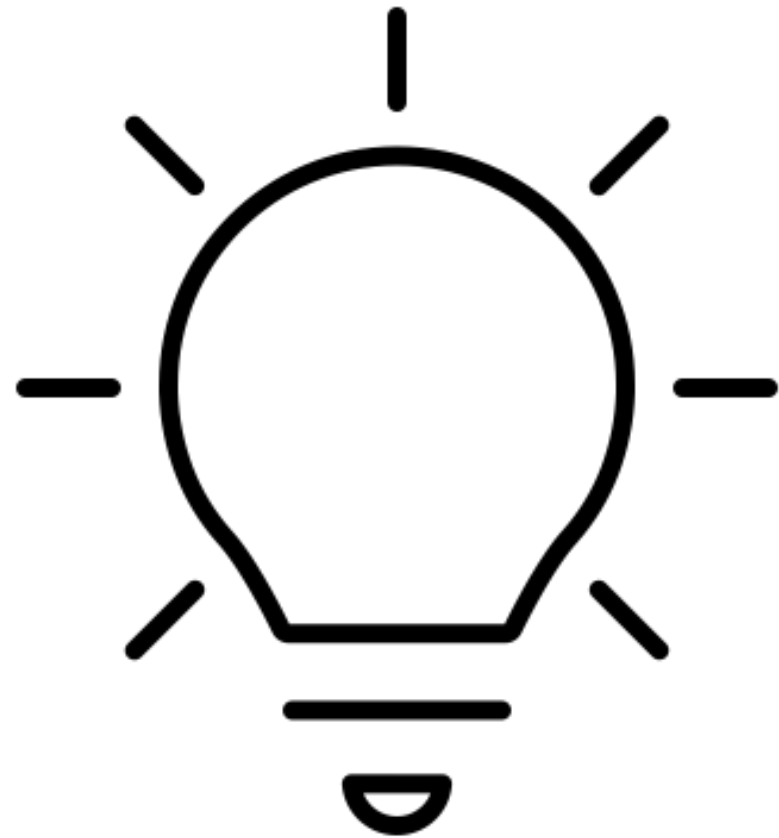
When do you start?



- Child should be fully toilet trained during the day
 - Initiates going to the bathroom
 - Few accidents
 - Urinates and has bowel movements in the toilet
- Many children experience bed wetting until 7 years of age!
- Be sure to consider medical contributions and sides effects of medication

Ways to prepare

- Lighting in the bedroom, hallway, and bathroom
- Child can independently get in and out of bed
- Have a consistent bedtime and bedtime routine
 - Child should go to the bathroom right before going to bed



One Wake Up Method

- Wake up the child one time to go to the bathroom
 - Typically 1 to 2 hours after the child has gone to bed
- Allows toileting practice during the night
- Empties the bladder



Intensive Training

- Wear underwear with a Wet-Stop to bed
- Before bed, practice the steps of going to the bathroom (starting in bed)
- Likely want plastic sheets on the bed
- Have baby monitor set up so you can hear the Wet Stop
- Give the child something to drink before bed

Intensive Training, part 2

- When the Wet-Stop goes off...
 1. Wake the child up as quickly as possible
 2. Prompt to go to the bathroom
 3. Change pajamas and sheets if needed
 4. Reset the Wet Stop
 5. Give the child a drink
- This will likely repeat several times during the night

When to Seek Help

When should you seek extra help?



- Toileting accidents are normative in early development
- Extra help may be warranted if your child is...
 - Developmentally 5 years of age or older
 - And having two or more accidents per week

What kind of help should you look for?

- Primary Care / Developmental Pediatrician
 - Rule-out associated medical conditions
 - Consider medication side-effect
- Behavioral therapy
 - Can be provided by a psychologist or BCBA
 - Should include parent training
- Services are available through KKI and Hopkins
- Pathfinders for Autism website: www.pathfindersforautism.org.

Resources: Step-by-Step Guides

- Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network. (2012). *Parent's Guide to Toilet Training Children with Autism* [Brochure]. Author. Retrieved April 01, 2021, from <https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Toilet%20Training%20Guide.pdf>
- Coucovanis, J. A. (2008). *The potty journey: Guide to toilet training children with special needs, including autism and related disorders*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Pub.

Resources: Visual Supports

- Educational resources for special needs. (1999). Retrieved April 01, 2021, from http://www.do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/selfhelp_toileting.htm
- Visual Aids for Learning Toilet Training - Boys. (2017). Retrieved April 01, 2021, from <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/ot-activityinformation-sheets/visual-aids-for-learning-toilet-training-boy/>
- Visual Aids for Learning Toilet Training - Girls. (2017). Retrieved April 01, 2021, from <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/ot-activityinformation-sheets/visual-aids-for-learning-toilet-training-girl/>

Questions

