

# TIP SHEETS

## Potty Training: Learning to Use the Toilet



Supporting a child who is learning to use the toilet can be an exciting and challenging time for both the caregiver and the child. Remember to stay positive!

### KNOW WHEN TO GO

Most children are ready to learn between 24–36 months of age. Look for the child's readiness cues. This often means the child:

- Can follow simple instructions.
- Can help to undress themselves.
- Can give verbal or facial cues of needing to use the toilet.
- Seems interested in learning.

Waiting until a child is truly ready will make the experience much faster and more pleasant for everyone involved!

### SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

#### *Verbal Skills*

In order to learn to use the toilet, a child must be able to understand your explanations/commands and be able to express their own feelings. A child will demonstrate they have these skills when they begin to use simple words for body parts and how they work.

#### *Body Awareness Skills*

Children must be able to associate physical sensations with their body's responses. Readiness signs include:

- Discomfort over dirty diapers.
- Removing their own diaper.
- Resisting being diapered.
- The ability to stay dry for two hours.

#### *Complex Thinking Skills*

Solving problems requires picturing a solution and planning a way to achieve it. By age three, a child's interest in problem solving will be evolving.

### PREPARATION

It is important to be ready when the child is ready to learn. Have a step stool on hand so the child can get on

the potty (you may need to help). Have several pairs of underwear on hand as well (you might still want a pull-on disposable for rest periods). Make a special trip to the store so that they can choose their own underwear style. Be prepared to do laundry daily in the beginning.

## ROUTINES

Similar to other activities throughout the day, using the potty has a routine. Bring the child to the toilet at least every other hour to help them learn the process. Stick to a schedule. Instead of asking the child if they need to go, tell them “it’s time to try.”

## ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

All children have accidents. Your patience is key to encouraging them that they’ll remember to use/make it in time to the potty next time.

- Help them listen to their body’s cues for needing to use the toilet.
- Stay near the restroom (as warnings are often delayed). When a child says that they need to go, be ready to run them to the toilet.
- Have books available to help pass the time as you wait for success.
- Offer lots of water to keep their bladder full so that the feeling is understood sooner.

With your support, the child will be potty trained soon!

## CELEBRATE THE SUCCESSES

- Praise the child for trying!
- Allow the child to add a sticker to their own success chart!
- Share the child’s success with others!



## AVOID SHAMING LANGUAGE

Toilet training can be stressful. Avoid language and behavioral responses which may reflect shaming.

- Maintain a positive tone when reacting to toileting accidents.
- Avoid telling children diapers are for babies and using phrases such as “big kids don’t...”
- Avoid pushing potty training before a child is ready.

*For more information, visit [inclusivechildcare.org](http://inclusivechildcare.org).*

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