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!

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

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!
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 the 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 will 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.

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