

Toilet Time! Let's Have Fun!



Learning to use the toilet is a big and exciting step for a child. It is also something that many parents and carers find difficult. Teaching children to use the toilet requires patience and persistence, and for some it may take longer than others. It is important to remember that your child will learn to use the toilet at their own pace. The toileting experience needs to be enjoyable and positive.

Here are some tips to support you to make it an enjoyable experience for both you and your child.

Before you start

- Check your child's health with your GP or paediatrician and discuss any medical conditions that could affect their bowel or bladder function.
 - Look for signs of readiness e.g. Can your child follow simple instructions, sit in one position for a few minutes at a time, or showing interest in the toilet? For more information or guidance about whether your child is ready, speak to your support professionals or visit websites such as [Raising Children - Toilet training: when and how to do it | Raising Children Network](#)
 - Think about whether your family is ready to start.
 - Read a book or watch a video about the toilet routine with your child so they can learn about the toilet and how it is used.
 - Let your child watch you or other family members use the toilet and talk about what you're doing. This shows that using the toilet is a normal and safe part of your routine.
- Practice dressing skills. You can refer to our guide *Making Getting Dressed Fun* for tips. For toileting, dress your child in clothes that are easy to pull up and down (e.g. pants/shorts, with elastic waistbands, skirts or dress).
 - Think about how you will communicate with your child, so they can understand the toilet process and learn to communicate their need for the toilet. You can say and repeat words verbally and/or use sign, gestures and visual cues (e.g. wee, poo, dry, wet, full, wash your hands).
 - If your child goes to childcare/ preschool, talk to the teachers about your plan to start teaching your child to use the toilet, so you can work together and use the same strategies.





Using the toilet

- Keep your child's toilet routine the same each time so your child can learn and practice during the day. You can write down your child's toilet patterns so you know when to guide them to the toilet, or plan toilet times after meals, sleep and exercise.
- Tune in to your child's words or body signals that communicate their need to use the toilet (e.g. wriggling around, removing pants, becoming quiet, hiding or passing wind).
- Make the trip to the toilet fun. Have a race to the toilet and change the way you move (e.g. do animal walks, crawl or jump). If your child is busy playing or doing an activity, use a timer to show them when they will be going to the toilet (e.g. TimeTimer app). Consider if they can bring some of that activity with them e.g. toy car, doll to watch them sit on the toilet. (See the *Transition Times* resource in this series).
- Ensure you are nearby when your child is sitting on the toilet. You can read a short story, sing a song, or blow bubbles while they are sitting to help them relax. After a few minutes, let your child off the toilet, even if they haven't done a poo or wee. Remember to praise your child for trying and celebrate any success.
- Once a toilet routine is established, start to introduce different toilet environments, such as a relative's home or shopping centre. Point out the toilet, toilet paper, flush button and sink to show they are similar to what they use at home.
- Refer to a visual/picture schedule to show your child each step of the toileting process. This can support your child to learn one step at a time until they can do it on their own.

The environment

Consider your child's sensory needs and how they will affect their toileting experience. There are many ways you can make the toilet area safe, relaxing and inviting for your child.

- If your child is sensitive to noises such as the toilet flush, fan, and echoes, you can speak quietly, add a mat or curtains to absorb some of the noise or play your child's favourite music to make them feel relaxed and happy.
- If the bathroom light is too bright, use soft lighting or bring a small, portable light.
- Decorate the walls with pictures, posters or sticker charts that would interest your child.
- Consider adding some colour to the water in the bowl, or floating boats or ping pong balls. Children enjoy watching the items floating in the water while they are sitting on the toilet. It can also be a distraction for them if anxious.
- Remove strong smells or add smells that are pleasant for your child.
- Make sure the toilet area is warm.
- Set up the toilet with the equipment your child needs, such as a toilet seat insert and footstool to keep them balanced and comfortable. These can be purchased in most department stores. For more specialised equipment, speak to your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist.



Keep it going!

- Use lots of praise when your child is learning to use the toilet. This keeps the experience positive and motivating for your child. You can say “You did a great job sitting on the toilet,” use gestures such as clapping hands or doing a hi-5, put a sticker on a reward chart or play a fun game.
- Act out toileting with your child’s doll, teddy, or other toy of their choice. You and your child can place a toy on the toilet and pretend they are using the toilet.
- Have a basket of special activities or toys that your child can only access when in the bathroom area so they can be happy, engaged and comfortable e.g. squishy balls, a dinosaur, a torch or some animals.
- If your child has an accident, reassure your child that it is okay and clean up calmly. This is common when children first learn to use the toilet. Have wipes, clean underwear and rubbish bag close to the toilet.
- Practice good hygiene habits e.g. washing hands, wiping your child’s bottom properly until your child learns how to and having clean clothes ready.



Need more resources?

If you have a Start Strong educator, they can help you with all aspects of toilet training such as making a routine, social story, and visuals to support your toilet learning journey.

Reference:

[Toilet training: When and how to do it | Raising Children Network](#)

[One Step at a Time: A Parents Guide to Toilet Skills for Children with Special Needs - Continence Victoria - VCRC](#)

[Guide to toilet training with Starting Blocks](#)

[Toms Toilet Triumph - YouTube](#)

