



Potty Training Your Child: When To Start

Potty training might be one of the most challenging things we have to teach our toddlers. When is the right time to start? Do you need special tools, toys, or tactics? Is there a strategy that is sure to work? Here are some helpful tips from our team of experts that will set you up for success as you help your child reach this milestone.

Wait until your child is physically and emotionally ready, which usually occurs around 24 months.

Look for signs of readiness:

- Physical Signs:
 - Stays dry during the day for at least 2 hours at a time
 - Bowel movements become regular/predictable
 - Ability to undress themselves
 - Facial expressions and sounds that reveal your child is having a bowel movement
- Emotional Signs:
 - Seeks privacy when having a bowel movement
 - Asks to be changed out of a dirty diaper
 - Wants to wear underwear

Create a reward system.

Use appropriate rewards for each step in the potty-training process:

- Stickers/sticker chart
- Counting jar
- Lots of praise!

Praise Small Steps. Reward a child's willingness to simply sit on the potty at the start of training.

What to do and what not to do.

Things to Do:

- Make the process fun by having your child select the potty chair with you.
- Familiarize your child with the potty process beforehand.
- Have your child watch you use the toilet. Children learn through modeled behavior.
- Maintain consistency in technique and across caregivers.
- Establish vocabulary/phrases you want to use to define body parts, bowel movements, urination etc.



Things Not to Do:

- Avoid punishment/negative reinforcement. You don't want your child to feel embarrassed or ashamed for having an accident.
- Avoid power struggles. Do not force your child to use the toilet if he/she is not ready.
- Avoid big rewards. Don't use money, food, or extra screen time as a reward for using the toilet.
- Avoid starting training during a big life change. You don't want to start potty training if your family is in the middle of a move, introducing a new sibling to the family, if you're changing your child's daycare, etc.

Be aware of common challenges.

Bed wetting:

- Have realistic expectations. Nighttime dryness may not occur for several months after daytime dryness has been established.
- Many times, no intervention necessary. Time is the solution.
- If your child has been consistently dry at night for six months and then begins to persistently wet the bed, contact your pediatrician to discuss the matter.

Fear of going #2 in the potty:

- Have your child watch you dump the remains of a dirty diaper into the toilet and then have your child flush it down. This helps them better understand the process and feel in control.
- Read a book to your child that explains the process, such as "Diapers are not Forever" by Elizabeth Verdick.
- If your child is completely resistant, take a break and come back to training in a month or two.

If you need more information on Potty Training please visit:
[Potty Training: Learning to the Use the Toilet • ZERO TO THREE.](#)