

Toilet Training Children with Special Needs

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Why Is Toilet Training So Important?

Toilet training is unarguably one of the most important skills that we need to learn in life. It not only increases our independence in virtually every setting, it also preserves one's dignity and promotes improved hygiene, health, social acceptance, and let's be honest--diapers are expensive so there are financial benefits as well!

Unaware of Toileting Needs

Your child is not yet showing awareness of toileting needs. He or she is not indicating any sort of discomfort when soiled or showing an interest in going into the bathroom. You may find that there is not an established pattern yet. They may soil their diaper minutes after you change them. If your child fits this description, you can start by taking steps now to get them ready!

Step 1. Identify Reinforcer

For this stage, you will only need a #3 reinforcer (you will learn about the other two as your child progresses and shows readiness). This is usually an edible treat/reinforcer or something that you can give and take away quickly. Edible reinforcers work well because you can give them often and they are done once consumed. While reinforcers are specific to individual preferences, some great examples of #3 reinforcers are:

- Goldfish crackers
- Mini M&M's
- Skittles
- 3 minutes of iPad time (caveat--if they already have access to the iPad anyway it will not be an effective reinforcer)

Step 2. Diaper Checks

You will begin teaching awareness by conducting diaper checks every 30 minutes for about 1-2 weeks. Follow the prompts on the flow chart below.



Step 3. Troubleshooting

- Intensive diaper checks: need to be done consistently and over a period of time, especially with children that experience developmental delays. They may need additional time to practice these skills and research suggests that it can take up to 21 days to form or break a habit. Stay consistent to help your child develop awareness of being dry versus wet. It can take a typically developing child up to 6 months so be patient.
- Training underwear: You may consider putting training underwear on your child so that they can experience the sensation of being wet/soiled. When they have worn diapers for years it is the only sensation that they know and it has to feel different in order to register a change in their physiological awareness.

Helpful Products with Links

Potty Pager



You might consider using a potty pager to help raise a physiological awareness. There are many models but this basic model worked well for me. It is fairly inexpensive and can also be used again for night-time training.

Cool & Learn Pull Ups



These pull ups use a technology that causes a brief and gentle cooling sensation when coming into contact with urine which can help cue the child that it's time to go potty.

Training Underwear



These training underwear have 6 layers of absorbent material in the front and back. They are made in sizes 2T all the way up to 8-9 years old. Made of breathable cotton and muslin cloth for sensitive skin.

Additional Resources to Print and Use

[First, Then Board](#)

[Social Story](#) (this is a free social story from Teachers Pay Teachers)

***Personalized Social Story available in the paid programs*

[Toileting Record](#)

[I Need to Use the Bathroom Visual](#)

Thank you for
trusting us
with your
journey

