

— Toilet Training for Learners with Physical Barriers

By JoAnna Rodriguez, M.S.,Sp.Ed.

4. Physical Barriers

Your child has some mobility needs, but that doesn't mean that he or she can't be toilet trained. Potty training children with mobility needs starts with interval training paired with a functional communication method. With consistent interval training, these kids will eventually be able to request toilet breaks. This not only promotes dignity and a sense of self, it allows him or her to better direct his or her own day, it also promotes hygiene and health when he or she does not have to sit in a soiled diaper for extended periods of time.

Step 1 Remove Physical Barriers

The first thing you'll need to do is identify equipment needs. Can your child walk to the bathroom? Can they get onto an off the toilet on their own? Is your child able to sit upright unassisted? Do they need extra support? You may need to consult with a Physical Therapist to determine the correct equipment for your child.

You will continue to use whatever equipment your child currently uses for ambulation: wheelchair, gait trainer, or adult-assisted ambulation.

Types of Specialized Toileting Equipment

Folding Toilet Adapter with Steps



This toileting system is great if your child just needs a little extra support getting onto the toilet and stabilizing while seated.

Rifton Toileting System



This toileting and hygiene system provides trunk and hip support. It is adjustable and is designed to roll over any toilet and doubles as a shower chair.

Step 2. Identify 3 Reinforcers

Before beginning your child's program, please take the time to identify what you will use as reinforcement. You will need 3 reinforcers as follows:

#1 Reinforcer

A unique, novel, highly preferred toy or object. This can't be something that they already have access to and they *only get it for voiding on the toilet.*

#2 Reinforcer

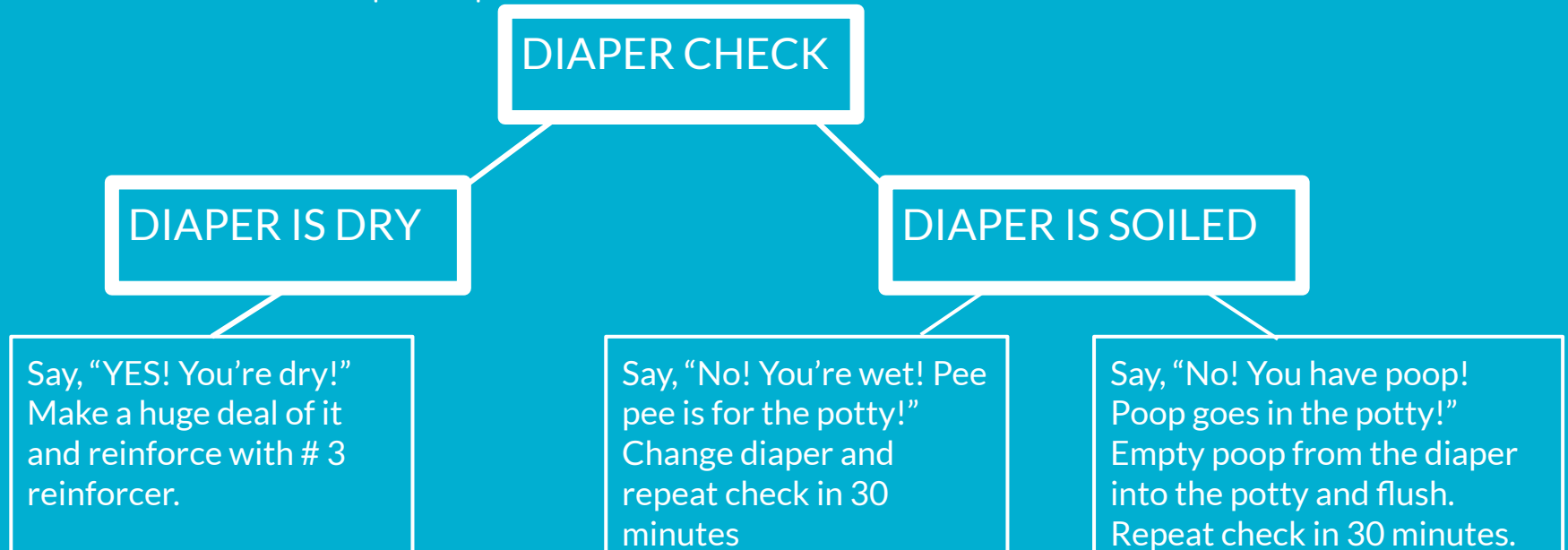
A preferred reinforcer (something they like a lot)--can only have it for sitting on the potty. If they end up voiding, they can have both #1 and #2 reinforcers

#3 Reinforcer

An edible reinforcer or something that you can give and take away quickly. Edible reinforcers work well because they are done once it is consumed.

Step 3. Diaper Checks

You will begin teaching awareness by conducting diaper checks every 30 minutes for about a week. This may take a really long time for a child with physical barriers. Follow the prompts on the flow chart below.



Step 3. Print and Prepare Visuals

First, Then Board Use this to reinforce sitting on the potty. You will need to print a picture of your #2 reinforcer to place on this board

Potty Chart Use this to reinforce voiding on the potty. You will need to print a picture of your #1 reinforcer to place on this board

Social Story This is a personalized social story. You will need to add photos of: you, your child, your bathroom, the underwears you will be using, the potty/toilet you will be using, #1-3 reinforcers and place them in the boxes where indicated

Toileting Record print and record results from each attempt. After a week, look for any apparent voiding patterns and adjust your potty times accordingly.

Potty Visual Place this outside of your bathroom or wherever you want your child to access it to build in the communication piece

Step 4 Determine Your Toileting Interval

You will decide upon a reasonable toileting interval factoring in the following:

- The amount of time it takes to transfer your child to and from the toilet (a 1 to 1.5 hour interval schedule is usually sufficient)
- How often your child soils his or her diaper (if they remain dry for 2-3 hours, you might want to try a 2 to 2.5 hour interval schedule)

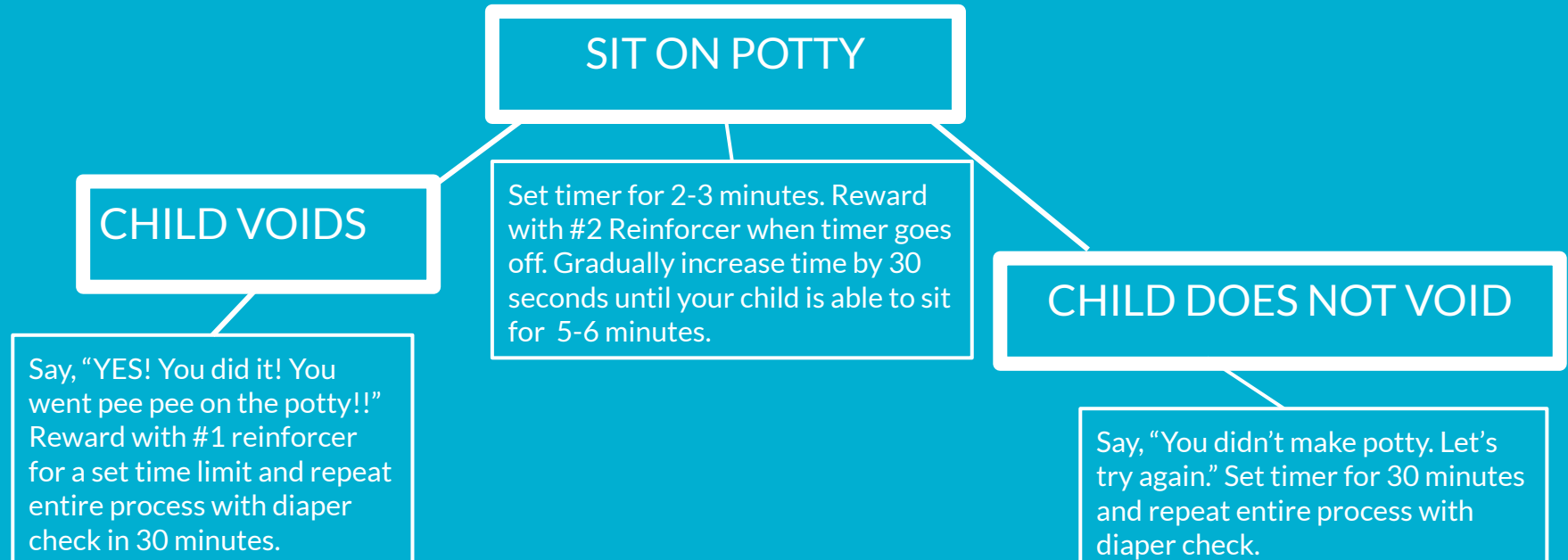
These are just suggestions, feel free to do whatever works for your situation.

Step 5 Preparing for the Trip to the Bathroom

1. **Social Story** : Immediately following the diaper check and prior to heading to the bathroom, review the social story so that your child understand what is happening.
2. **Reinforcer Review** : Ask your child if they'd like to earn reinforcer #1 and really dangle the carrot to motivate them.
3. **Communication Modeling**: Prior to going into the bathroom, point to the “Potty” visual or AAC device and say it as your pointing. After diaper checks, be sure to use the “Wet” and “Dry” visual. This is a really important step because the language has to go in before it can ever go out. Your child needs this modeled with plenty of repetitions.

Step 6. Sit on the Potty

After reviewing the social story, reinforcers to be earned, and modeling communication, help your child onto the potty. Follow flow chart.



Step 7. Troubleshooting

-
- **Adjusting Intervals:** The more your child is on the potty, the greater the chances for success. Some children may need shorter intervals in between toilet breaks, especially if your data suggests that they eliminate regularly at a certain time. If you see a pattern in your data, reduce your intervals during times that your child has a tendency to eliminate.
 - **Check and Adjust Equipment:** You'll want your child to be able to focus on voiding and not expending all of his or her energy trying to maintain posture and stabilize on the potty. This is a lot of work! Recline the backrest a bit if they have one or find an option with lateral supports if you see them struggling with positioning.

Focus on the Communication

The most important thing to teach when potty training children who experience physical barriers is the receptive communication piece. Consistently model the language the child will use to request “potty” in the same manner that they will be expected to do so. If they use AAC, model it on AAC....If they are using PECs, model it with PECS, etc.... The point being the language will have to go in receptively using the same manner that you will expect the output. They will need plenty of repetitions before it can be expected to come out expressively.

Thank you for
trusting us
with your
journey

