

Toilet Training: 12 Tips to Keep the Process Positive

Toilet training is a big step in your child's development. Being supportive and positive throughout the potty-training process is key. Here are some tips that can help.

1. **Choose your words wisely.** Choose positive words your family will use to describe body parts, urine and bowel movements. Avoid words that are negative, like dirty, naughty or stinky.
2. **Pick a potty-chair.** A potty-chair is a child-sized seat with an opening in the seat and a removable container underneath to collect pee and poop. Children's feet should be able to reach the floor. Books or toys for "potty time" may help make this time more fun.
3. **Be a role model.** Let your children see you use the toilet and wash your hands afterward.
4. **Know the signs.** When your children feel the urge to poop, you might notice grunting, squatting or freezing. Children's faces may turn red while pooping. Explain briefly to your children that these signs mean a poop is about to come. If your children tell you about a wet diaper, praise them for "using their words." It may take longer for children to notice the need to pee than the need to poop.
5. **Think of toilet training as toilet mastery.** Invite your child to take over their toileting. Talk with them about how they will now be in charge of their pee and poop. Read children's books about using the toilet to help the process make sense and seem inviting and exciting. When you start the process, try to turn as much of the care of toileting as possible over to your child. Remember, if parents are in charge, there is less room for children to step in and take charge.
6. **Make trips to the potty-chair a routine.** Routines are important, and practicing the steps is helpful. Make a habit of seating your children onto the potty-chair first thing in the morning. Boys can urinate by sitting down first and can stand up to urinate when better at it.
7. **Expect hesitancy.** Taking over toileting is a big step. Many children want their parents to take care of their pee and poop and may seek ways to keep parents involved, such as peeing and pooping into their pants. Gently help them overcome their hesitation. Then help them stay in charge by having them be in charge of the cleanup.
8. **When toilet training starts, switch to big-kid underwear.** Talk with your children about taking control and toileting into the toilet and not their underwear. Some parents may use cloth training pants, which are a little thicker, to protect children's clothing. (Diapers and disposable training pants send a message to children that they are not taking over and do not need to learn to use the toilet.)
9. **Teach your children proper hygiene habits.** Show your children how to wipe carefully. Girls should spread their legs apart when wiping. They should wipe thoroughly from front to back. This helps prevent bringing germs from their rectum to their vagina or bladder. Make sure both boys and girls learn to [wash their hands](#) well after using the toilet.
10. **Be precise with praise.** Taking over toileting is something all healthy children do. Achieving mastery is the best reward for toilet training success. Avoid treats and punishments. Because this is an adventure for your children—a reach for new responsibility—treats and punishments distract rather than encourage. When your children succeed, be specific about why you are proud—"I am so proud you are able to use the toilet so well," for example.
11. **Avoid a power struggle.** Children at toilet training ages are becoming aware of their individuality. They look for ways to test their limits. Some children may do so by holding back bowel movements. Try to stay calm about toilet training. Remember that children control when and where they pee and poop. So power struggles, begging, pleading, rewarding, and punishing keep children from managing their own toileting.

12. **Understand their fear.** Some children believe that their pee and poop are part of their bodies. They may be scared the toilet will flush parts of them away. Some may also fear they will be sucked into the toilet if it is flushed while they are sitting on it. To give your children a feeling of control, let them flush the toilet.

Remember

Toilet training is a learning experience. Follow your child's cues, and remember that they'll get the hang of it at their own pace. Don't hesitate to talk with your child's pediatrician about any questions or concerns you have during your child's potty-training process.

More information

- [Create a Potty Training Plan for Your Child](#)

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Toilet Training: Which Method is Best?

Just as everyone has a different opinion about when it's best to begin toilet training, so every parent you know is likely to use or recommend a different training method.

You may have heard that demonstrating toilet use for your child is a good way to help him learn through imitation. A friend may have told you that all she had to do with her son was read him a book about potty use and talk it over with him. Many parents recommend talking with their children about toilet use and then asking every two hours, "Do you need to go?" Some feel that rewarding a child with gold stars on a chart or a small treat is the most effective method. Timing is also a factor, as some parents prefer a brief, concentrated approach (perhaps even taking time off from work to deliver two weeks of "immersion training"), while others feel that their children are less pressured when allowed to adjust to potty use gradually over many months.

Any of these techniques may work well with your child. But keep in mind that it is not necessary to choose a single method—in fact, your child will benefit from a combination of verbal, physical, social, and other forms of training no matter what his age.

Accepting and adjusting to your child's personal style can make toilet training a much less stressful experience than you may have expected. You may also find yourself getting to know your child in a way you didn't before—appreciating his special qualities, becoming familiar with his emerging interests, and respecting him as a unique, interesting individual.

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