

## TOILET TRAINING

Toilet training is easy!! It is easy if you wait until your child is ready, and if you remain unemotional and non-judgmental about her progress. Invest one calm week and you will be amazed at the results.

1. When is your child ready? Readiness is related to acquired motor skills. The statistical age of readiness for both boys and girls is 27 months, so it is reasonable to try at this time. Exceptions would be: very delayed walkers, or family situations, such as the arrival of a new baby, a move, or an illness, which prevents you and your child from focusing on the toilet training process.
2. Remember training is a learning process. It should not deteriorate into a contest between your will and your child's. S/he will win the contest. When your child was learning to walk and fell down, you did not scold her for losing her balance, and discuss the mechanics of foot movement. You simply picked her up, applauded her effort, and kept encouraging her. Toilet training should be approached in the same way.
3. Pick a convenient day to start. If your child is in daycare, begin when there is the longest stretch of home time before returning to daycare.
4. Pick a reward: stickers, M&M's, Hershey's kisses. We all perform better for rewards. The children will spontaneously stop asking for them after a few weeks.
5. Discard or use up the remaining diapers. NO diapers are used at any time during your training week.
6. Purchase one or more potties that look like small toilets and that sit on the floor. Do not use an adapter for the large toilet. This usually requires the parent to participate and we are striving for complete independence.
7. Purchase lots of smashing new undies. Pull-ups are not good as the children think of them as diapers. Also buy several bed sized flannel covered rubber sheets (available at Amazon.com, keyword: waterproof) that you place as the top layer over the bottom sheet on the bed. It is helpful to put all the rubber sheets on each time so that if one is wet during the night, you can simply pull it off and the bed is ready again. Wash the rubber sheets in the machine, but hang to dry. The dryer will crack the rubber.
8. Dress your child in clothing that is easy to pull down. No snaps, zippers, or overalls during the early training weeks.
9. When all this is ready, announce to your child that toilet training is beginning and that from now on there will be NO diapers. Tell her about the rewards and that you will be reminding her of times to go.
10. Every hour and a half to two hours say to your child. "It is time to go to the potty." Do not ask if she wants to go. All two year olds will say, "No." Then walk her to the bathroom. If she changes her mind halfway, give the reward and praise the cooperation. Remember that Pavlov rewarded every little part of the desired action until the whole task was accomplished. Most children will go in and try to perform. Boys should stand to urinate. These early tries will usually produce no results but would, of course, be rewarded.

11. Inevitably, five minutes after the attempt your child will have an accident. Do not preach about what would have been avoided if she had urinated five minutes earlier. Just say that the accident is nothing and offer to help her change her clothes. You may help as much as needed, but your child should feel that she is managing the change.
12. Continue this way through the day. If you need to go out, wait until she has urinated and go out for a SHORT time. Take an extra pair of undies and pants with you and do not panic if there is an accident.
13. Bowel movements usually occur at more predictable times. When you see "that look," whisk your child to the potty and try to keep her there by reading or talking for 3 to 5 minutes. With luck she will go in the potty. If not, clean her up, do not scold or make disparaging sounds of disgust.
14. For naps and nighttime, dress your child in pajamas that are easy to remove, put the potty in her bedroom and that's it.
15. Continue with this routine for 7 days. Do not expect gradual improvement. The light will dawn suddenly, even on day 6 or 7.
16. There are three reasons to stop your training attempts. The most important one is if your child won't comply with the program. If she objects to your suggestions to go and vigorously refuses to try, STOP. Tell her you picked the wrong week and put away the potty and undies. Put diapers on and do not discuss training or try again for 3-4 weeks. Another reason to stop is that you arrive at day 7 and your child has been totally cooperative but is not assuming any responsibility for toileting. By that time, she should be going alone or asking to go more than half the time. Again, if this is the situation, STOP and wait 3-4 weeks before resuming. The third reason is that you find yourself tense and angry about the training process. You will not be able to hide these feelings from your child no matter how hard you try. So stop and resume later. It is impossible to overcome your child's resistance. She has ultimate and total control over toileting. Training gets its reputation for being so odious from parents' fruitless attempts to overcome resistance.

When your child is ready, unemotional cooperation and success will be the result. Have courage.