

No More Diapers: Is Your Child Ready?



"No more diapers!" Sounds great, but how do you get ready for toilet learning? Here are some tips.

Be sure you are ready!

Helping your child learn to use the toilet takes time and patience. Have a potty chair, a child-sized seat that fits the toilet, and a sturdy stepstool on hand. Training can take three months or more. Children with disabilities or developmental delays may need extra time and practice.

Get your child interested!

- Let your child get to know their potty chair or portable toilet seat. Your child may want to try sitting on it fully clothed.
- Check out children's books about using the potty and read them with your child.
- Let your child observe you using the toilet, if you are comfortable with that.
- Show your child how the toilet works. Let them flush the toilet.
- Never leave a toddler alone in a bathroom.

Teach the right words.

Use the terms you want your child to use. You might say in a friendly voice, "I'm changing your diaper because you peed in it." "You pooped in your diaper, so I'm putting on a clean one." Use terms that other people will understand.

Watch for signs that your child is ready.

Most children learn to use the toilet between 2 and 3 years of age. Girls show signs of readiness an average of three months before boys. Your child may be ready to start toilet training if they show any of the following signs:

- Knows the diaper is wet or dirty and wants a clean one
- Has bowel movements at regular times
- Stays dry for two hours at a time
- Uses facial expressions, sounds, or words to show they are ready to urinate or have a bowel movement
- Understands the terms you use for bladder and bowel functions
- Follows simple directions and likes to put things in the right place

Be aware of signs that your child is not ready.

You may need to wait a little longer if they simply don't want to sit on the toilet or if they are going through any of the following:

- An illness
- A phase of irritability or power struggles with you
- Major life changes such as the birth of a new baby or moving to a new home

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.