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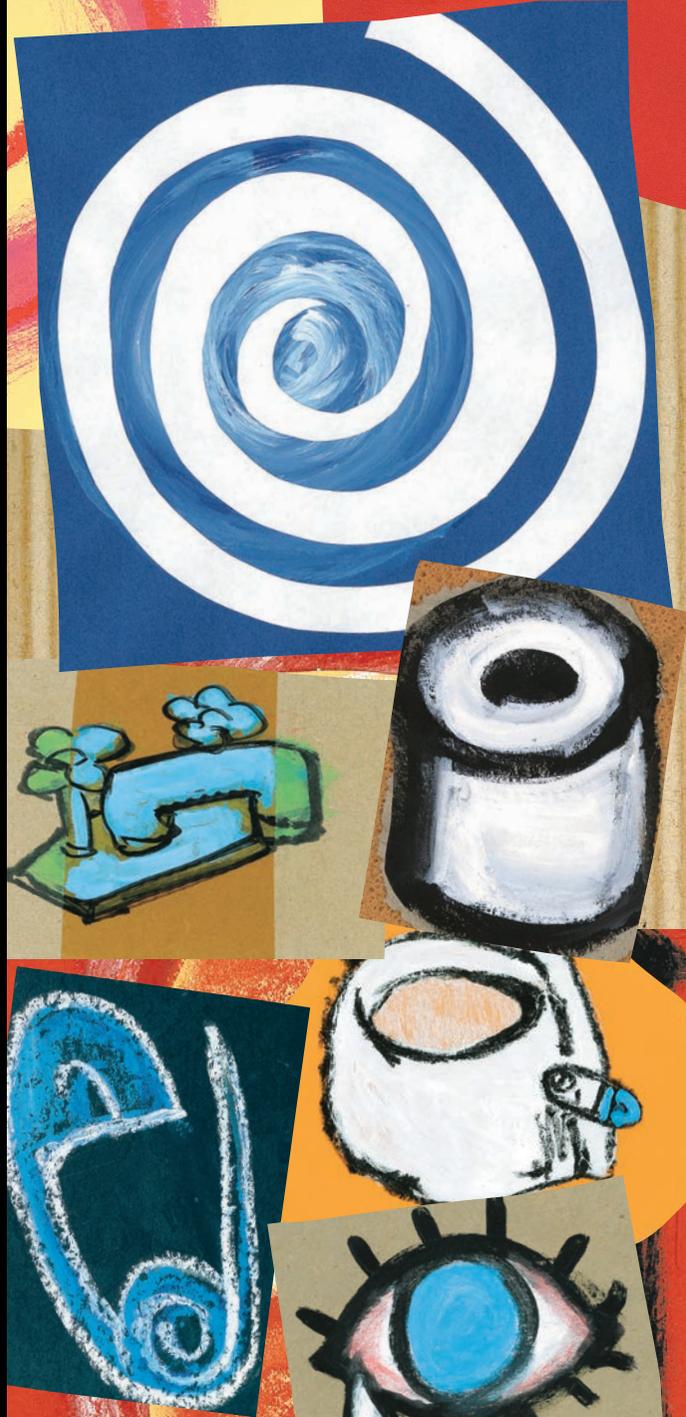
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# TOILET TEACHING WITHOUT TEARS

FROM WET TO DRY



C H I L D R E N ' S H O M E S O C I E T Y O F C A L I F O R N I A

Toilet learning takes teamwork between parent, child, and the child care provider. Success depends on patient, understanding adults and a child who is physically, intellectually, and emotionally ready. Between the ages of 18 and 30 months, a child begins to show the readiness signs.



## ★ SIGNS OF TOILET LEARNING READINESS:

Your child may be ready to begin toilet learning when the following signs are displayed.

**Your child:**

- Can understand and follow simple directions
- Can dress and undress himself
- Can run and climb easily
- Has a dry diaper for at least 2 hours during the day
- Has a dry diaper after naps
- Expresses an interest in using the toilet
- Expresses an interest in her bowel movement
- May initiate toilet behavior
- Dislikes staying in a wet or soiled diaper
- Tells you he is urinating or having a bowel movement

**When these signs are present, begin to talk to your child about toilet learning:**

- Teach your child the words you want him to use regarding toileting.
- Talk to your child about the sensations of elimination.
- You may want to read to your child one or more children's books about toileting and elimination.
- You may want to buy a potty chair. Although this isn't necessary, some children are more comfortable with their feet on the floor, and may be frightened by the water and flushing action of a toilet.
- Let your child sit on the toilet or potty chair in her diapers to get used to the idea of going to the potty and the purpose of the toilet.



## ★ FORMAL TEACHING

Formal toilet teaching may begin once your child has shown the signs of readiness and is able to tell you he has soiled his diaper. He is recognizing that his body has done something different. Help your child understand the real purpose of the toilet or potty chair.

Seat her on the toilet after she has had a bowel movement in her diaper. Unfasten the diaper and drop the contents into the toilet.

When he tells you he is wet or had a bowel movement, acknowledge the act saying: "I'm glad you told me. Let's try next time to put it in the toilet."

Remind her routinely of the toilet or potty chair's purpose.

Teach your child good bathroom habits from the start. Show him how to wipe properly, throw away the toilet paper, and wash his hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

When your child is able to tell you before she goes, give her training pants to wear and encourage her to use the toilet or potty chair. She will see that you have confidence in her ability to take control of this task and do it without your help.



## ★ COMMON DIFFICULTIES

- Don't push toilet learning too hard. Your child may fight back by holding bowel movements. Toilet learning is a natural development and can't be rushed.
- Treat accidents with a casual, matter-of-fact manner. "Oh, I see your pants are wet. Let's go get some dry ones." You might add: "Sometimes it's hard to remember when you are playing so hard. Would you like me to remind you?" For many children, day and night bladder control may not be achieved until age five.
- Regressions such as imitating baby talk and actions are normal.
- Factors that may interrupt the learning process and cause the child to forget what he has learned may include:
  - Birth of a new baby
  - Entering a child care setting
  - Moving
  - An adult leaving the home
  - Illness
  - Death of a loved one, including a pet
- A child needs extra patience and positive reminders during these more difficult times. Remember, toilet learning is not a race or contest. In a crowded room of adults, no one will know or care who learned to use the toilet first.
- Toilet learning is but one step a child takes toward acquiring important life skills. His accomplishment will give him confidence that he can achieve success in other aspects of his development.



## ★ TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Acknowledge all progress with a hug, a kiss, and a few words of praise, but don't overdo it!
- Never criticize or punish when a child is unsuccessful.
- Maintain a good-humored, casual attitude.
- Remember this is the child's task to accomplish; do not engage in power struggles.
- Some children may want a parent or caregiver to keep them company while they use the bathroom.
- Children also may enjoy reading books while in the bathroom.



Start toilet learning based on what your child can do, not by your child's age.



## TO LEARN MORE

### BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

#### **EVERYONE POOPS**

Taro Gomi

#### **ONCE UPON A POTTY**

Alona Frankel

#### **A POTTY FOR ME!**

Karen Katz

### BOOKS FOR ADULTS

#### **BECOMING THE PARENT YOU WANT TO BE**

Laura Davis & Janis Keyser

#### **TOILET LEARNING**

Alison Mack

### ORGANIZATIONS

#### **THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS**

(847) 434-4000 or [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)