

## Skills for Living

# Occupational Therapy Advice for Toileting Skills and Bottom Wiping



Children are independent with toileting when they can get on and off the toilet, wipe themselves effectively, manage their clothes and wash their hands without any help.

Every child will achieve toileting skills at their own speed, depending on their physical development and level of understanding.

Toilet training takes a lot of patience. Here are some signs that your child might be ready to learn:

- They can let you know when their nappy or pants are wet or dirty
- They know when they need to wee or poo. They may show this by crossing their legs, putting their hand between their legs or wriggling up and down.
- They can stay dry for an hour or more

If your child is not showing these signs, they might not be ready for toilet training.  
  
You can help prepare them by:

- Doing all nappy changes in in the bathroom, so they begin to associate this room with weeing and pooing.
- Show them that their poo goes from the nappy into the toilet. Then flush the toilet. Explain what you are doing every time.
- Once your child is dressed, both wash your hands.
- This reinforces the whole toilet routine.

### Strategies to use:

1. Make sure your child can sit safely and comfortably on the toilet.

- Use a child sized seat or insert so that your child can't fall into the toilet. The seat should not be wobbly.
- Make sure your child's feet are supported. Use a step if they can't reach the floor.

2. Make it as easy as possible for your child to get their clothes off and on.

- In the early stages of toilet training at home, it is best to just wear pants and a T-shirt or pyjamas.
- Loose clothes with elasticated waists are easiest. Avoid tights.
- Encourage your child to pull down their own pants and pull them up again afterwards.

3. Doing the task:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure this is not an unpleasant experience for the child</li> <li>• Create a little rhyme or song to say out loud</li> <li>• Do things in the same order each time</li> <li>• Break the activity down into parts: i.e. taking clothes down, sitting on the toilet, staying on the toilet, wiping their bottom, pulling up clothes, flushing the toilet, washing hands..</li> <li>• Use lots of praise and positive reinforcement. Some children respond well to sticker charts</li> </ul>
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**Techniques to help develop skills:**

Hand over hand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use your hand to physically guide the child’s hand to do the task. E.g. For wiping, get the child to hold the paper, then guide their hand to reach round and wipe their bottom. <b>Look at the bottom-wiping visual guide for a helpful way to hold the paper.</b></li> <li>• Encourage the child to do as much as they can themselves, but help them when needed.</li> </ul>
Backward chaining: Working <i>backwards</i> until the child can do the whole activity themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The adult starts the task and the child finishes off the very last part e.g. To teach the child to wipe their bottom after using the toilet: the adult would do most of the wiping and the child would complete the last, “check it’s clean” wipe themselves.</li> <li>• Gradually encourage the child to start earlier and do more of the task as they get better at it.</li> </ul>
Forward chaining: Working <i>forwards</i> from the start of the task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using bottom wiping as an example: the child does as much as they can without help – tearing off the required amount of paper, reaching to do the first wipe etc. The adult then helps to finish off and “check it’s clean”.</li> <li>• Gradually encourage the child to do just a little bit more until they can manage the full task without help.</li> </ul>

**Encouraging independence: Goal, Plan, Do, Check Approach**

<p>GOAL</p> 	<p>What is the Goal? What would the child like to be able to do better? E.g. “Wipe my bottom by myself.”</p>
<p>PLAN</p> 	<p>How are we going to achieve the goal? This is the step by step plan. Break it down into stages. It is really important to use the child’s own words and descriptions e.g.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tear off two sheets of toilet paper</li> <li>2. Hold them so they cover my hand.</li> <li>3. Put my thumb above my bottom hole and my fingers below it</li> <li>4. Move my fingers and thumb together to get the poo in the paper</li> <li>5. Drop the paper in the toilet</li> <li>6. Do it again until the paper stays clean</li> </ol>
<p>DO</p> 	<p>This is when the child completes the activity by following their plan. Just do it!</p>

<p>CHECK</p> 	<p>Think back – ask the child – encourage them to think</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you do it?</li> <li>• What worked well?</li> <li>• What do we need to do differently?</li> <li>• Do we need to change the plan a little?</li> <li>• Add a stage if you need to.</li> <li>• Sometimes you can help the child remember and follow their plan by using a rhyme or action words e.g. Paper, Wipe, Drop it in. Check it's clean.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Encourage the child to check how well they are doing:</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a picture sequence to remember the steps e.g.</li> </ul>  <p style="text-align: center;">Girl Potty Schedule</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the child to check whether they've done each part of the sequence properly?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sticker charts</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place a sticker on their chart for each part of the task</li> <li>• Lots of sticker chart ideas are available on the internet – look on Google, <a href="http://www.pinterest.com">www.pinterest.com</a> etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder pictures</li> </ul> 	<p>Make some reminder stickers or pictures to put up in the toilet or bathroom – try to make them fun for your child</p>

<p><b>Activities to practice:</b></p>	
<p>Activities to help the child reach around and behind their body</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play with sticky-tape or stickers. Stick pieces to your child's body (with their clothes on) and get them to reach and pull them off. Place them on the back pockets, back of shoulders and bottom of their feet. All of these help with learning to reach and balance in the way needed for toileting.</li> <li>• Play scarf hide-and-seek. Hide a scarf (or a hanky, ribbon or tea-towel) in the child's pocket / up inside their t-shirt / up a trouser leg etc. Get them to pull it out</li> </ul>
<p>Wiping activities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You will need a plastic plate and some chocolate spread, peanut butter or other spread that your child is happy and safe with. Marmite is too hard to wipe.</li> <li>• Put some splodges of spread on the plate</li> <li>• Get the child to wipe the spread off the plate using tissue paper</li> </ul> <p><i>Continued overleaf</i></p>

<p>Wiping activities continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If this is easy, put the spread onto a half inflated, slightly squidgy balloon. Can they wipe it clean now?</li> <li>• Put some spread onto their leg / arm and do the same then try a part of their body they cannot see e.g. the back of their leg.</li> <li>• All of this helps build skills and confidence for real-life bottom wiping.</li> </ul>
<p>Get organised. Prepare in advance</p>  <p>When the paper is clean so are you!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toilet paper can be torn into pre-prepared lengths. Ideally the length between the hand and elbow (2-3 squares)</li> <li>• Once the child is able to tear off just enough paper you can just go straight from the roll.</li> <li>• Top tip – before placing the roll on the holder – squash it flat a little. This stops the roll spinning too easily.</li> <li>• Continue wiping until the paper stays clean.</li> </ul>

### Sensory considerations to help develop toileting skills:

Balance may be an issue in sitting on the toilet. Make sure the child's feet are supported

Using wet wipes can increase your child's awareness of sensation around their bottom. **Wipes are never safely flushable so must be put into a bin.** Your child can use toilet paper to dry off their bottom afterwards so they don't get sore.

If your child is worried about touching poo, you could let them use rubber gloves for wiping, but also do activities to get them used to touching messy things (Sensory play).

Think about calm lighting and smells such as lavender or chamomile in your bathroom for over-sensitive children. Bright colourful lights and citrus smells may help increase arousal for those children who need it. Let your child choose a smell that you both like.

Don't force the child to stay in the room when you flush. Shut the lid to reduce the noise of the flush. Let them stand just outside the door while you flush and gradually get them to stand closer until they can do the flush.

Show your child the workings of the toilet so they can understand what is making the noise.

Use ear plugs, headphones, ear muffs or ear defenders to block the noise of flushing – especially in public toilets. Hand driers usually have a fused switch above them on the wall which can be turned off so they won't startle your child.

To give you more control over the environment, you can use disabled toilets. You can buy a RADAR key online to get access to many locked, disabled toilets.

**Useful resources:**

Family toilet seat with an additional smaller aperture for children



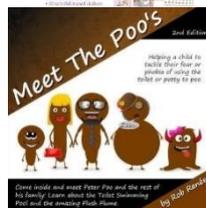
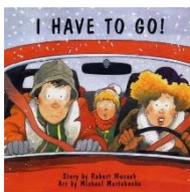
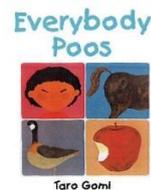
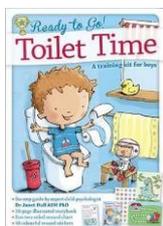
4 in 1 toilet seat – can be used as a potty, then on the toilet as a seat and step without having to change equipment. The seat has handles to help balance and is easy to take with you when you go out.



Easy GoPro step – This helps both children and adults sit in a good body position for using the toilet. It can be helpful if children experience discomfort when having a poo.



Books / Social Stories. There are lots of fun books to read about using the bathroom including:



**Websites and online links for more information:**

Raising a Sensory Smart Child - Practical ideas and strategies with a focus on sensory challenges	<a href="http://www.sensorysmarts.com">www.sensorysmarts.com</a>
Pinterest - An online notice board of information	<a href="http://www.pinterest.com">www.pinterest.com</a> Type search words e.g. "toileting skills for kids", "learning to wipe bottom"

For further information:

**[Establishing Toilet Routines for Children \(Tip Sheet\)](https://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/consumers/Youth/Establishing-Toileting-Routines-for-Children-Tip-Sheet.pdf)** – AOTA <https://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/consumers/Youth/Establishing-Toileting-Routines-for-Children-Tip-Sheet.pdf>

**[Teaching Concepts for Potty Training through Play](https://www.yourkidsot.com/blog/teaching-concepts-for-potty-training-through-play)** – Your Kids OT  
<https://www.yourkidsot.com/blog/teaching-concepts-for-potty-training-through-play>

**[Potty Training Instruction Tips](http://www.kidsplayspace.com.au/potty-training-instruction-tips/)** – Kids Play Space  
<http://www.kidsplayspace.com.au/potty-training-instruction-tips/>

**[Gross Motor Skills and Toilet Training -](https://www.yourtherapysource.com/blog1/2016/02/21/toilettrainingandgrossmotorskills/)** Your Therapy Source  
<https://www.yourtherapysource.com/blog1/2016/02/21/toilettrainingandgrossmotorskills/>

**[Potty Training, Toileting and Fine Motor Considerations](http://theinspiredtreehouse.com/potty-training-toileting-and-fine-motor-skills)** The Inspired Treehouse  
<http://theinspiredtreehouse.com/potty-training-toileting-and-fine-motor-skills>

**[Potty Training with Attention and Behavior Problems](http://www.theottoolbox.com/2016/02/potty-training-with-behavior-attention-problems.html)** | Sugar Aunts  
<http://www.theottoolbox.com/2016/02/potty-training-with-behavior-attention-problems.html>

**[Potty Training Tricks to Teach your Child to Wipe Themselves](http://lemonlimeadventures.com/creative-potty-training-trick-to-teach-your-child-to-wipe-themselves/)** – Lemon Lime Adventures  
<http://lemonlimeadventures.com/creative-potty-training-trick-to-teach-your-child-to-wipe-themselves/>

**[Useful Potty Training Videos](https://www.charmin.com/en-us/tips-and-articles/how-to-potty-train-a-boy)** by Charmin  
<https://www.charmin.com/en-us/tips-and-articles/how-to-potty-train-a-boy>  
<https://www.charmin.com/en-us/tips-and-articles/how-to-potty-train-a-girl>  
<https://www.charmin.com/en-us/tips-and-articles/fun-toilet-paper-roll-art>

**[Toileting and Sensory Processing](http://www.missjaimeot.com/toileting-sensory/)** | Miss Jaime OT  
<http://www.missjaimeot.com/toileting-sensory/>

**[Modifications For Potty Training](https://therapyfunzone.net/blog/modifications-for-potty-training/)** Therapy Fun Zone  
<https://therapyfunzone.net/blog/modifications-for-potty-training/>