

I Got To Go Potty!

A Lesson on Toilet Training

Playgroup #21

Materials Needed

- Notepad and pen for notes if desired

Handouts

- **The Potty Train reward chart**

Introduction

Have a discussion with all the parents in attendance. See if anyone has ever or currently are toilet training their child. Discuss how they decided it was time to start and what techniques they tried. See what they would do differently next time around. NOTE: If no one in attendance has had experience in potty training discuss together what you think you would do. How would you know when to start and what techniques would you try?

Lesson Plan

Lesson Objectives

- Know how to tell when your child is ready to Toilet Train
- Understand various techniques that will help your toilet train.
- Remember accident will happen, and know how to deal with them.

When Should I Start Toilet Training?

Toilet training is an important step in a child's life. It is among one of the first major accomplishments they achieve. Having a successful toilet training experience can form a strong foundation for all future achievements. It is important to make sure both you and your child are ready before you start the processes. You are ready when you are able to devote the time and energy necessary to encourage your child on a daily basis for at least 3 months. Your child is ready when he or she can signal that the diaper is wet or soiled, or when your child is able to say that he or she would like to go to the potty.

There is no set age at which toilet training should begin. The right time depends on your child's physical and psychological development. Between 18 and 24 months, children often start to show signs of readiness, but some children may not be ready until 30 months or older. Every child is different and will be ready at different times. Be sure that your child is emotionally ready. They need to be willing, not fighting you or showing signs of fear. If your child resists strongly, it is best to wait for a while.

It is best to be relaxed about toilet training and avoid becoming upset. Remember that no one except the child can control when and where a child urinates or has a bowel movement. Try to avoid a power struggle. Children at the toilet training age are becoming aware of their individuality and look for ways to test their limits; some children may do this by holding back bowel movements.

How Do I Know if My Child is Ready?

As mentioned earlier, toilet training success hinges on physical and emotional readiness, not a specific age. If you think your child is ready, observe your child and ask yourself these simple questions:

- Does your child seem interested in the potty chair or toilet, or in wearing underwear?
- Can your child understand and follow simple instructions?
- Does your child stay dry at least 2 hours at a time during the day?
- Does he or she wake from naps dry?
- Does your child tell you when he or she needs to go potty or poop?
- Can your child pull down his or her pants and pull them up again?
- Does your child's facial expressions, posture, or words reveal that they are about to urinate or have a bowel movement?
- Does your child seem uncomfortable with soiled diapers and wants to be changed?
- Can your child get to the potty, sit on it, and then get off again?
- Does your child express desire to have control and do adult things?

If you answered mostly yes, your child may be ready for potty training. If you answered mostly no, you may want to wait a little longer — especially if your child is about to face a major change, such as a move or the arrival of a new sibling. A toddler who opposes potty training today may be open to the idea in a few months.

How Do I Teach My Child to Use the Toilet?

When you decide it's time to begin toilet training, set your child up for success. Start by maintaining a sense of humor and a positive attitude. This will help your child feel like this is a positive experience rather than a stressful one. Then, keep the following in mind as you start this process.

- **Decide what words to use.** You should decide carefully what words you use to describe body parts, urine, and bowel movements. It is best to use proper terms that will not offend, confuse, or embarrass your child or others.
- **Pick a potty chair.** A potty chair is easier for a small child to use, because there is no problem getting on to it and a child's feet can reach the floor.
- **Help your child recognize signs** of needing to use the potty. Your child will often tell you about a wet diaper or a bowel movement after the fact. This is a sign that your child is beginning to recognize these bodily functions. Praise your child for telling you, and suggest that "next time" he let you know in advance.
- **Encourage the use of training pants.** This moment will be special. Your child will feel proud of this sign of trust and growing up. However, be prepared for "accidents." It may take weeks, even months, before toilet training is completed.

- **Make trips to the potty routine.** When your child seems to need to urinate or have a bowel movement, go to the potty. Explain what you want to happen. Read a potty-training book or give your child a special toy to use while getting used to the potty chair or toilet. Stay with your child when he or she is in the bathroom. Even if your child simply sits there, offer praise for trying — and remind your child that he or she can try again later. Encourage your child with lots of hugs and praise when success occurs.
- **Get there fast!** When you notice signs that your child may need to use the toilet — such as squirming, squatting or holding the genital area — respond quickly. Help your child become familiar with these signals, stop what he or she is doing, and head to the toilet. Praise your child for telling you when he or she has to go.
- **Remember the importance of good hygiene.** Teach girls to wipe carefully from front to back to prevent bringing germs from the rectum to the vagina or bladder. Make sure both boys and girls learn to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- **Consider incentives.** Some kids respond to stickers or stars on a chart. For others, trips to the park or extra bedtime stories are effective. Experiment to find out what works best for your child. Reinforce your child's effort with verbal praise, such as, "How exciting! You're learning to use the toilet just like big kids do!" Be positive even if a trip to the toilet isn't successful.
- **Be consistent.** Make sure all of your child's caregivers — including babysitters, child care providers and grandparents — follow your potty-training routine.
- **Ditch the diapers.** After several weeks of successful potty breaks, your child may be ready to trade diapers for training pants or regular underwear. Take time to celebrate this transition. Go on a special "big kid" outing. Call close friends or loved ones and let your child spread the news. Once your child is wearing training pants or regular underwear, be careful to avoid overalls, belts, leotards or other items that could hinder quick undressing.
- **Treat mistakes lightly.** Accidents are inevitable — especially when your child is tired or upset. When it happens, stay calm. Simply say, "Uh-oh. You had an accident. Let's change you. Pretty soon you'll remember to use the potty chair every time you have to go."
- **Sleep soundly.** Most children master daytime bladder control within three to six months of starting potty training. Nighttime control may take months — or years — longer. In the meantime, you may want to use disposable training pants when your child sleeps.

- **Know when to call it quits.** If your child resists using the potty chair, toilet or simply doesn't get the hang of it, take a break. Chances are he or she simply isn't ready yet. Try it again in a few months. If your child isn't interested in potty training by age 3, you might ask your child's doctor for suggestions.

If any concerns come up before, during, or after toilet training, talk with your pediatrician. Keep in mind, most children achieve bowel control and daytime urine control by 3 to 4 years of age. Even after your child is able to stay dry during the day, it may take months or years before he achieves the same success at night.

Remember, Accidents Will Happen

You may breathe easier once your child learns how to use the toilet, but expect occasional accidents and near misses. Here's help handling and preventing wet pants.

- **Stay calm.** Kids don't have accidents to irritate their parents. Don't add to the embarrassment by scolding or disciplining your child. You may say, "Oops, you forgot this time. Next time you'll get to the bathroom sooner."
- **Slow down.** Remind your child to relax and take it slow. Completely emptying the bladder can help prevent accidents.
- **Offer reminders.** Accidents often happen when kids are absorbed in activities that — for the moment — are more interesting than using the toilet. To fight this phenomenon, suggest regular bathroom trips, such as first thing in the morning, after each meal and snack, and before getting in the car or going to bed. Point out telltale signs of holding it, such as fidgeting or holding the genital area.
- **Be prepared.** If your child has frequent accidents, absorbent underwear may be best. Keep a change of underwear and clothing handy, especially at school or in child care.

Activity

As you prepare for toilet training, it is especially important to follow your child's signs of readiness. As much as you may want your child to be toilet trained, it will only be successful if your child is physically, emotionally, and psychologically ready. To help keep you in that mind set, together with the moms and children play Following the Leader. Depending upon the age of the children in attendance you could play two different ways. If your children are old enough to walk around and copy what you do, try version 1. If the majority of your children are still infants than try version 2 for a good laugh and lots of fun.

Version 1

First a leader or "head of the line" is chosen, than the children & parents all line up behind the *leader*. The leader then moves around and all the children have to mimic the leader's actions. Any players who mess up or do not do what the leader does are out of the game. The last person standing other than the leader is now the new leader.

Version 2

Ask everyone to stand and arrange the group into a circle, facing inwards. Ask one person to leave the room for a minute. This person will be the guesser for the round. While he or she is gone, the group decides who should be the “leader.” The leader will be the one who sets the movements for that round. When this person is chosen, invite the guesser to come back. The guesser stands in the very center of the circle.

When the round begins, everyone starts swinging their arms up and down. The leader will eventually begin to do other movements, and everyone else mimics the leader’s actions, without being too obvious to reveal who the leader is. The leader can do just about anything he or she wants, such as:

- clapping
- making a kicking motion with his or her leg
- jumping up and down
- singing a line from a song
- patting his or her own head
- a dance move

Everyone in the circle should be careful to avoid prolonged eye contact with the leader, so the leader’s identity is not given away. The guesser must keep turning his or her head to try to figure out which person is the leader (the person who is starting of all the group’s movements). The guesser is allowed to make up to three guesses. If the guess is incorrect, the round continues. If the guess is correct, the leader becomes the new guesser for the next round. If all three guesses are exhausted and the leader is not correctly guessed, the round ends and you can either keep the same guesser or switch it up.

This action game tends to be hilarious, as people try to copy the leader’s silly movements. Enjoy.

Suggested Reading

Everyone Poops

by Taro Gomi

I Want My Potty

By Tony Ross

Uh Oh! Gotta Go!

By Bob McGrath

References

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, www.nichd.nih.gov

National Institute of Health, www.nih.gov

American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org

American Academy of Family Physicians, <http://familydoctor.org/>