

How To Potty Train Toddlers

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Is your child ready for potty training? Most children begin to show interest between 18-24 months, yet can start much earlier or even later. This can be a trying time for everyone involved so just remember to remain calm. Here are some tips and techniques to get you started.

1. **Prepare.** Before you plop your little one on the potty, prepare them for what is coming. There are many valuable books that help explain the process. You can even start sharing these with your child several months before actually starting. Explain the advantages to using the potty such as no full diapers. Let them go to the bathroom with you, close relatives or trusted friends so she can see how it's done. Going with the same gender parent is often best so they can learn the proper way.
2. **Is she ready?** If your child hits 20 months and still doesn't show interest, she may not be ready. If you spent time in preparation, chances are she will be ready to at least begin the process. If she consistently stays dry for a couple of hours and has predictable urination and bowel movements, it is a good time to start. She may also begin to express discomfort in soiled diapers and an interest in wearing underwear.
3. **Are you ready?** It is absolutely necessary for your child to be ready, yet it is equally necessary for you to be ready. Potty training should be a priority for you, so make sure you don't have any alternate commitments. Stay calm during this time and try not to get upset.
4. **Provide a potty.** There are several potties on the market and most of them are fine for use. Just make sure it's sturdy enough to hold your child. You may want to purchase more than one. That way you can put one in the bathroom and one in a playroom, where she is most comfortable. More than one also comes in handy if your house is multi-level so you can have one on each floor.
5. **Resistance.** Does she protest every time you take her to the potty? This is an indication that she is simply not ready. Continue reading about the potty and taking her with you to the bathroom until she is ready. Some children will refuse to go while being watched. In those cases, let her try on her own while you stick close by, often poking your head in the door to see if she needs help.
6. **Accidents.** They will happen, a lot. Again, remain calm and understand that it is part of the process. Many children tend to go right after coming off of the toilet. Learning how to relax the muscles for a bowel movement or urination takes time. If underwear becomes soiled, don't feel guilty about tossing it out.
7. **Establish a routine.** Encourage practice by going often. Try to read your child and understand her bowel movement patterns. When you take her to the bathroom, don't let her sit on the potty longer than four minutes. If she does not go, then take her off and let her try again later.
8. **Give praise.** Whatever you do, refrain from negativity. This makes the child self-conscious and could delay her desire to be successful with potty training. Instead, use positive affirmation by saying things like 'good for you,' 'congratulations,' or 'yay!' Offer rewards for a job well done. Even moving up to training pants marks a huge achievement for your child. Training pants will make her feel special and as if she has graduated to the next level.
9. **Fears.** Many children are afraid of the loud sounds of the toilet flushing or may be worried that they will be sucked into the toilet and disappear. You can help alleviate these fears by teaching them what happens and why you have to flush. You can even play games like throwing toilet paper in and flushing it away so they can practice and learn how it works.
10. **Overnight.** Once your child gets the hang of the potty during the day and the training pants come off, it's time to focus on the night. Avoid too many liquids and have her use the potty one last time just before bed. Although it may be tough, once she learns to use the potty and is out of training pants, don't put them on your child at night as it can send mixed messages. Let her know that if she wakes in the night and has to go that she can call out for you or come wake you up to help.
11. **Proper hygiene.** Buy the proper toiletries for sensitive skin. Teach your child proper wiping techniques and to close the lid before flushing to avoid germs spitting up in the air. When finished, show her how to wash her hands. Sometimes singing a song, like the alphabet, while soaping up will make it fun for her. Once the song is finished, she can rinse off.
12. **Teaching materials.** Some good potty training books include 'Potty Training 1-2-3: What Works, How it Works, Why it Works' and 'Dry All Day Potty Training Skills Workbook.'