

Learning to Use the Toilet

Is Your Toddler Ready?

Usually, children learn to use the toilet between ages 2 and 4.

Your toddler is likely ready if she:

- stays dry for a few hours at a time
- sometimes wakes up dry from a nap
- can follow simple directions
- knows when she's peeing or pooping
- can let you know when she needs to use the toilet
- is able to pull down her pants and underwear by herself



KEY TAKEAWAY

Rushing toilet learning can make it frustrating for you and your child. By waiting until she's ready, you'll make it easier and she'll feel more successful.



DID YOU KNOW

Many children are scared by the flushing of a toilet, so be sensitive when you empty the potty. Toilets that flush automatically and any toilet that's unfamiliar can be scary, too. Try packing the potty along until your child is comfortable using the bathroom away from home.

Keys to Toileting Success

- ✓ **Choose the right time.** Wait until your toddler seems ready, and start when there are no other big changes going on in your family.
- ✓ **Try not to pressure her.** Most children take between 2 weeks and 6 months to learn. Be patient and try not to be upset over accidents.
- ✓ **Make potty time a regular part of your routine.** Have her sit on it as soon as she wakes up and regularly throughout the day.
- ✓ **Praise her attempts.** Try "Yay! You went pee on the potty!" rather than "Good girl!" This tells her that whether she succeeds or not doesn't make her good or bad in your eyes.
- ✓ **Talk about the benefits** of using the toilet, like getting "big kid" underwear.
- ✓ **Be ready when you're away from home.** Know where you can find public bathrooms. And bring along the potty chair if you're going on a trip.
- ✓ **Use the right words.** Talk to your toddler about toileting so she'll have the words to express her needs. Use the correct terms for body parts and functions, and cut down on embarrassment by not using negative words like "stinky."



TRY THIS

Encourage your toddler to teach her stuffed animals to use the potty chair.

What You'll Need

- A potty chair. Place it next to the main toilet. Or use a special seat that fits over the toilet's seat, along with a solid step stool.
- Clothes with elastic waists that can be pulled down quickly. You may even choose to let your toddler go without pants while at home.

Steps Along the Way

Learning to use the toilet is a skill that takes time to learn. Staying dry all night often doesn't happen until a child is 6 years old or older. Sometimes your toddler may even take a step backward. And even older children have accidents, especially when they're sick, cold or very involved in play.

Using diapers

If your child is dealing with a big change or just won't use the potty chair, you may need to go back to diapers for a while.

If your toddler doesn't want to poop in a potty chair or toilet, let her continue to use diapers for part of the day so she doesn't get constipated.

Using training pants

Pull-on training pants look like underwear but are made from diaper material. You may find them useful at night or when you're away from home with your toddler.



BRAIN BUILDER

Give your child a book to look at while she sits on the potty chair. Check the library for books about toilet learning.



TRY THIS

If you're comfortable, let your toddler watch you or another same-sex parent, brother or sister use the toilet. Seeing what you're doing can help her figure it out for herself.



FAMILY STORY

Right from birth, I said things to my son like, "Doesn't it feel good to be dry?" So when it came time to start toilet learning, he already understood the idea of "wet" versus "dry."

