



Exploring infants and toddlers



Capital District
Child Care Council

a tipsheet for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 2

Let's Go!

10 Ways to Tell if Your Child is Ready for Potty Learning

Figuring out whether a child is ready to start potty training can be a challenge. Many people have strong opinions about when and how to potty train their child, however potty learning is a process that requires many skills. Instead of focusing just on the age of the child as the determining factor, watch the child's abilities as a sign of readiness.

1. **The child has a dry diaper for at least 2 hours** at a time: babies urinate as a reflex, when that stops happening it indicates the bladder is large enough for success
2. **The child knows when he is wet** or had a bowel movement: a child cannot be successful if he/she can't tell what happened
3. **The child indicates discomfort when wet**
4. **The child is able to sit up for at least 5 minutes:** the child needs to be able to support himself while sitting on potty
5. **The child can undress himself:** using the bathroom is a self-help skill
6. **The child can get himself to the potty**
7. **The child can and is willing to follow simple one step directions**
8. **The child can answer simple yes or no questions:**
Are you ready for the potty? Are you wet?
9. **The child can imitate others**
10. **The child can comfortably be with a trusted adult**

The more care a child gives himself, the more he will like himself and continue to give himself care.



Once the potty learning process has begun, it is important to dedicate time to the process. Established, simple, and repetitive routines are very helpful. Reminding a child to use the bathroom can be beneficial for keeping the goal in a child's mind. It is best to avoid overwhelming children with too many potty requests which may result in resistance. If a child feels pressured to go to the bathroom, he may refuse to go and this can cause constipation and other issues. Reminders once an hour is more than enough. Some tips:

- ✓ Set a timer to go off every hour to remind a child to use the potty.
- ✓ Try using training pants and liners instead of pull-ups so a child knows when he is wet.
- ✓ Set consistent routines and use similar potty equipment between child care and home.
- ✓ Once a child is taken out of diapers, he needs to stay out of them. It becomes confusing to a child to be placed in a diaper at different times, like a shopping trip or a vacation.
- ✓ Write and read stories about using the potty.
- ✓ Consider having a potty learning child wear clothes that are easy for him to put on and take off like elastic waistbands and loose fitting pants. Avoid clothing items that are difficult like buttons, snaps, and tights.
- ✓ Plan for accidents, they are natural.
- ✓ Never punish a child for potty issues.
- ✓ Never force a child to use the potty
- ✓ Avoid rewards for using the potty

When potty learning is approached positively as a learning process, many benefits arise for the child. A child can feel accomplished, empowered, capable, and confident

Resources:
American Academy of Pediatrics:
www.healthychildren.org
Honig, Sterling, Alice (1993).
"Toilet Learning."

Kinnell, Gretchen (2004). Good Going!
Successful Potty Training for Children in
Child Care. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

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