

# Helpful tips for toilet training

## When is my child ready for toilet training?

Children achieve toilet training on their own timelines. Developmental delays, including delays with motor skills, learning skills, and language skills, can impact upon your child's readiness for toilet training. Before you begin the process of toilet training, it is important that your child displays *readiness* signs or behaviors.

## Toileting readiness

Common readiness signs include:

- Your child wants to use the potty or wants to wear big-boy/big-girl underwear
- Your child tells you that they're about to go, are going, or have just gone in their pull-up/diaper.
- Your child pulls at or removes their wet or dirty pull-up/diaper.
- Your child hides somewhere to pee or poop.
- Your child shows an interest in others' use of the potty, or copies their behavior.
- Your child has a dry pull-up/diaper for a longer-than-usual time.
- Your child wakes up dry from a nap.

If your child is not displaying these skills, that's ok, toilet training can wait. If your child has motor delays, this can affect their readiness - the bladder is a muscle, and awareness of sensation in the bladder, along with the ability to hold urine in the bladder, is necessary for toilet training. Learning, motivation, attention, and language difficulties all impact upon a child's readiness skills as well.

## Tips to improve success

- Set up a sticker-chart reward program for your child. Put the sticker chart in the bathroom and keep the stickers in the bathroom so you can put them

on the chart right away. You can also use candy/food to reward your child. Children can earn stickers, trips to the prize box, or other rewards. Instructions and more tips for setting up a reward program are included in the NIS newsletter.

- Read a social story with your child. Sample social stories are included in the NIS newsletter. Feel free to edit the story to include pictures of your child, your family, and your bathroom. You can also edit the story to include the reward program you are using.
- Place a visual reminder of toileting steps in the bathroom for your child (examples included in the NIS newsletter)
- Pick out underwear that your child will be excited about (favorite characters favorite colors, etc.) You can even have your child help you select their new underwear
- Relax and stay calm. If you are stressed out about toilet training, your child will pick up on this and become nervous or stressed too.
- Avoid getting into a power struggle – urinating or defecating in a toilet is one of the few things your child has control over. If your child learns that they can use their toileting behaviors as a means of control over you, it will be harder to toilet train your child. Stay calm and relaxed if it feels like toilet training not working.
- If (or really, *when*) your child has an accident, do not make a big deal out of it. Accidents happen. Clean your child up and remind your child gently that they are working on learning to use the toilet and you know they can make it to the toilet next time.

## This is not working for my child

If toilet training is not working for your child at this time, try not to be discouraged. Take a short break for a few weeks, and then try again. The last thing you want is for toileting to be a negative experience for your child. Your child WILL become potty trained – it just takes some time for your child to be ready.

Also remember, this is a stressful time for many families. Children pick up on the stress in their households. If your family is experiencing high levels of stress right now, this is probably not the best time to embark on toilet training.

If you have any other questions or need additional help, please do not hesitate to reach out to the social worker or psychologist for your child's classroom. If you do not know who the social worker or psychologist is for your child's class, please ask your child's teacher.