

## Potty Training

Cloth diapers are great for your baby, but as your toddler grows they look forward to certain milestones just like you do. Children who are around older children are especially keen to “do what the big kids do” and you can use this fact to motivate them to potty train. Most toddlers are able to potty train from around 18 months or older.

In countries where the market share penetration for disposable diapers is still low (China, Russia, and India), their babies learn much faster than in countries where disposables have a large market share, like America. One reason why is because disposable diapers incorporate the super absorbent (SAP) qualities into their diapers so it is more difficult for toddlers in disposables to tell when they are “wet”. These toddlers have difficulty learning the connection between urinating and going to the potty when they feel relatively “dry”.

One of the benefits of using cloth diapers is your toddler can feel the correlation between his body functions and the way his cloth diaper feels. Your child can immediately connect with **why he should want** to “go to the potty like the big kids do”. When you use cloth training pants these reinforce that wetness is uncomfortable. Disposable pull ups tend to thwart potty training efforts because children don’t get the feedback that wetness is not acceptable. [Cloth training pants](#) (like the ones we provide at our diapers service) have additional padding in the crotch area and if you want to waterproof them you can add pull-on pants (especially useful at night time).

### How To Tell When Your Child is Ready

There are a few indicators that your child may be ready to potty train. Teaching some basic motor coordination skills independent of the potty training can aid your success. Just as important are some cognitive and physical signs such as:

- your child should be in a cooperative stage, not a contrary one
- be able to follow simple instructions (i.e. “Pull your pants down”)
- has dry period of at least three hours (which shows their bladder muscles are developed enough to hold urine)

In addition it is helpful to your child to not have too many changes at once. If you are planning on moving your home, bringing a new baby home or renovating it may not be the best time to start potty training. **Potty training is a complex task for many in that it requires that your child learn certain skills and does them in the same order each time.** If too many other changes are occurring at the same time, your child will be less successful at learning this task.

The skills your child needs to learn for potty training are:

1. Awareness that he needs to go to the bathroom
2. Pulling his underwear/pants down
3. Sitting still for at least 3-5 minutes (on the potty)
4. Letting his body relax, so it can expel urine or feces (read, sing or talk)
5. Wiping his private parts
6. Pulling his underwear/pants up (this is actually the hardest and last mastered step for most children)
7. Washing his hands

## **Prepare for Training**

Prior to the potty training stage you will want to go through your child's clothing and remove pants with zippers, snaps and buttons that may interfere with your child's ability to pull down (and up) his pants by himself. Remove any pants that are a little tight on their bottom that may prevent them from easily being removed. Involve your toddler in daily practice of putting his clothes on and removing them so he develops the motor coordination he will need to pull his pants down and back up to use the potty. For girls, skirts are ideal.

If your child is expressing interest in "being a big boy (or girl)", this is a good time to take him to the store to pick out his potty chair! Getting him involved in choosing between two seats that you approve, is key to him liking to sit on his chair! Some parents decide to use a step stool to assist children up to the standard height toilet. Keep in mind that some kids find it hard to have a bowel movement and "push" when their feet are dangling and prefer to have their feet on the floor. However, keep in mind that when your child is not at home he will often need to use the standard height toilet so, occasionally ask if he wants to sit on mom's and dad's potty to "try it".

It can also be helpful to purchase children's books on potty training so that you can read about it in a relaxed setting with them, separate from any training. Start by purchasing one with characters or a theme that they are already interested in (see our section on "Finding Books"). Placing the books you've already read together by the potty also gives your child something to do while he waits for a bowel movement! **Never make your child stay on the potty** longer than a few minutes (he will not want to sit on it again because he will associate it with a penalty). If he doesn't use the potty, **encourage the next use** by saying something like "Oh well, maybe you'll be ready to use the potty in a little while".

**Your job is to properly assess if your child is ready, prepare for this stage with the proper equipment and rewards, and stay consistent, positive and calm throughout this period.**

## **Let the Training Begin!!**

### **Let Your Child Decide**

Each child is unique. Don't start potty training just because someone else thinks he is "old enough". When you think your child is ready you **need to role model what you want him to do, describing each step as you are doing it**. Then ask if he is ready to try. If he declines don't force the issue, just keep modeling and describing the behavior that you will expect from him on a daily basis.

DO NOT force your child to begin training or to continue if he balks. If you persist when he is not interested, you can expect resistance and lack of cooperation, which will prolong the training period (and drive you crazy). **Your role as a parent is to enable him to be independent**. You want him to be successful at controlling his own body's functions; **this is not about you having control**.

## Give Positive Feedback

Your child will be successful when he realizes that he is in control of his body and then act on it. Let him know that pee and poop belongs in the toilet and his job is to help it come out in the right place!

**Immediately** after your child has gone to the bathroom in his potty **you need to give him positive feedback**. This can be as simple as clapping your hands, hugging him, doing a little celebration dance and/or putting stickers on a chart. The point is to acknowledge and reward his success and **to help him feel proud of his new accomplishment**. Never punish or lecture your child when he fails, rather encourage him that he can do better next time!

Children are very curious about pee and poop. They often examine it and make comments about it. You should avoid making any negative comments about it, just let them know it is natural and that everyone goes potty. If they don't like the smell you can use an air freshener (but explain to them that they need to ask you to spray it until they are older).

You can make a simple progress chart for your child using the skills we outlined and rows for stickers when he or she are doing well. [Free potty training charts](http://www.pottytrainingconcepts.com/CTGY/FREE-Potty-Training-Charts.html) are available on-line at <http://www.pottytrainingconcepts.com/CTGY/FREE-Potty-Training-Charts.html>. At the end of the week, you can count the stickers for each task **with your child**. **Point to the tasks with the most stickers** and let her know which tasks she is doing well. This is her opportunity to visually see that she is not doing well at all the tasks without you telling her. Keeping focused on what she is doing well gives her your approval and encouragement to keep trying. Another thing to keep in mind is that children usually don't learn how to be successful at peeing and pooping at the same time. Allow them to progress (and reward them) at their own rate.

Experiment to find what works to motivate your child to continue training. For some the stickers or stars do the trick, for others at the end of every week after you count the stickers you may choose to give a special reward that you know they will value highly.

## Schedule Potty Breaks

Initially you will have to remind your child "it's time to try to go to the bathroom", and you will need to do this at least every 30 minutes; using your previous days' experience you can start to wait longer to remind them. Later you will be able to tell by your child's body signals that she needs to go (i.e. red face, grunting, holding themselves, dancing on their toes) and help her recognize what these body signals mean. Every time you prepare to leave the house you should go to the bathroom with your child (it helps if you show her that you are going to try going to the potty also), and once you reach your destination you may want to try again.

Once your child is good at telling you "I have to go", you should stop reminding her and turn the "knowing when you need to go" responsibility over to her. Make sure you give ample praise for her learning this step – it's a big one! You can gain a lot of mileage if you give a special reward for mastering any step (i.e. an extra 20 minutes of playtime, a special picnic, an ice-cream treat).

## Consequences for Accidents

In the beginning there should be no consequences for accidents and you should accept it with a calm comment like "Sometimes accidents happen, you'll try to do it in the potty next time". You may want to

place your child on the toilet to see if any more comes out. You should encourage your child to help with clean up, so she can experience the natural consequences.

For some children the natural consequences may not be enough to reinforce the behavior you want as you continue training. Another possible consequence is to make your child practice the desired behavior, mixed with letting her know that play cannot continue until she is done practicing. You may need to turn off the TV and/or restrict her from play areas until she complies. Give her the option to sit at another spot until she is ready to practice in order not to make this a power struggle. Do not make her sit by herself on the potty for longer than a few minutes or it will become associated in her mind as a “penalty space”.

### **Boys Are Different**

Because boys will see other men standing when urinating it can be confusing whether to teach them standing up or sitting down. Most families start training sitting down just because bowel movements and urine often come at the same time. However, if your child spends a lot of time with dad and other males he may insist on standing up right away. In either case, when you make the decision to train your son to urinate standing up the use of cereal in the toilet or other “targets” will help him to aim accurately.

When you purchase a potty look for one with a removable urine guard. You will want to avoid your son hurting himself while sitting down (by scraping his penis). Either use the potty without it, or install it after he sits down to avoid this type of painful accident.

The main difference for **training girls** is the direction of the toilet paper wipe; in girls you always wipe from front to back (to help bacteria from coming in contact with the vagina). If your girl has seen boys standing up and she wants to try it, let her! It won't take long for her to figure out she doesn't have the right equipment to make this work very well.

### **Night Time Potty Training**

When your child stays dry at night a few times, start letting him sleep in his underwear (after you purchase a waterproof cover or sheet). Let your child know that you are trying something new to see if it works and then give it a week or two. Try to limit the amount of fluids he drinks after 6 p.m. In addition, try waking your child to go to the bathroom right before you head to bed. If your child persists in wetting the bed, tell him his body just isn't “ready yet” and let him know “we can try again later; the diapers will just help you at night while your bladder has time to grow up”. Some children are deep sleepers and their bodies will have a harder time waking up to go to the bathroom. When they start staying dry at night make a big deal of it and celebrate at breakfast!

### **When To Seek Professional Advise**

- If you have worked with your child 3 months or more and he or she is not successful
- If your child is holding back her bowel movements or becomes constipated.
- If your child tells you it hurts to urinate.
- If your child is afraid to sit on the potty (after more than 1 try at potty training)
- If your child is hiding from you to go to the bathroom in her pants.
- If your child is older than 6 and still wetting the bed at night time.

## **Finding Books to Help Your Child Potty Train**

### **By Rivka Kawano**

Potty training is one of those milestones that never seem to come soon enough - and then when it does feels so overwhelming. Getting buy-in from your little guy or gal can be one of the first hurdles. Finding great books that deal with potty training can help your child feel more comfortable with the idea, introduce basic concepts, and even give you something to entertain each other with on those sometimes long "try" sessions on the new potty. But with so many books out there, how can you find one that is right for you and your child? Here are some things to consider.

#### **Consider Gender**

Some parts of going potty are the same no matter what. But being able to identify with learning to use the potty, becoming a "big girl" or "big boy," and modeling can sometimes be helpful. A variety of books are good, but it is important to include books that specifically girls or boys can relate to, such as "[Lily's Potty](#)" for girls, or "[The Potty Book for Boys](#)."

#### **Consider Your Child's Interests**

I have talked to many parents whose little champ took to the potty like a duck to water. My youngest (now 15 months) seems like he might be one of those early-adopters as he already demonstrates an awareness of when he needs to "go" and is happy to sit on the potty. But for others, like my oldest, now 3, they need a little coaxing. Books can be great in this department as the stories can help normalize the idea of going potty, and also connect it to things your child already loves. Does your daughter adore Dora the Explorer? Then perhaps "[Dora's Potty Book](#)" is just the thing.

For my boys, trains are something they're really into. We have train tracks, train engines, train cars, even a train tent! So, "[The Potty Train](#)" was exactly what we needed to suddenly transform sitting on the potty to a fun train ride complete with bells and whistles. Many book and movie characters sport their own potty book; just look and see what you can find!

#### **Suggestions**

Suggestions on how to make our information better for parents are always welcome. If you have an idea on information that you feel should be added to this article, please let us know at [DyDeeBaby@gmail.com](mailto:DyDeeBaby@gmail.com).

#### **Discussion**

Feel free to ask Potty Training questions or share information on DyDeeBaby's facebook page!