



Toilet Training Advice & Guidance

Generally, children will start to show an interest in learning to potty train at around two-years-old to two-and-a-half, but every child will be different and they should not be pressurised to start before they are ready.

Signs that children are starting to develop bladder control include:

- Knowing when they've got a wet or dirty nappy
- Becoming aware when they're passing urine and telling you about it
- Fidgeting or going somewhere quiet.

Toilet Training for Children with Additional Needs

Potty training children with additional needs can be done in much the same way as teaching a child without additional needs. Some things to consider:

- Children with additional needs can't always communicate their thoughts and feelings so you can't rely on their signals to tell you when they're ready to potty train. Knowing how often your child goes for a wee or poo will really help. [Complete a bladder and bowel assessment chart](#) to help you decide if they're ready. You can then create a potty or toilet routine based on the information in the chart.



- It's important that your child feels relaxed, comfortable and secure about using a toilet or potty. If you start with the toilet you should use a footstool to help your child feel confident and safe.
- A footstool also helps children get into the best position for doing wees and poos, with their feet supported and knees above hips. You might want to see an occupational therapist who can advise which support is best for your child while potty or toilet training.

Top 10 potty training tips for successful toileting:

1. **Drink plenty:** Make sure your child is having 6-8 drinks of water-based fluid a day to help keep their bowel and bladder healthy. Avoid fizzy drinks, drinks with caffeine in them and sugary drinks. Don't limit their drinks to help them stay dry as it doesn't work. The bladder needs to be filled and emptied properly to keep it working well.

2. **Check for constipation:** Your child should poo at least four times a week and the poo should be soft and easy to pass. If they're passing hard poos or going less often than this, they may be constipated. Leaking, runny poo can also be a sign of constipation. [Download ERIC's Guide to Children's Bowel Problems](#) for more information.
3. **Use easy clothing:** Clothes that are easy to pull up and down are the best; avoid fiddly zips and buttons. Choose clothes that are easy to wash and dry. It can help to practise getting dressed and undressed. Let your child choose their own pants and practise wearing them to get used to the feeling.
4. **Pick a potty:** Let your child choose a potty if you're going to use one. Keep it in the bathroom and let them practise sitting on it. You might want to have more than one potty to begin with. If you're using a children's toilet seat, let your child choose it and a foot stool to help support them when they're on the loo.
5. **Get into a routine:** Don't ask your child if they need a wee or a poo as they might not know what this is to begin with. Call it 'potty time' or 'toilet time' and go every couple of hours.
6. **Keep it short:** Don't let them sit for too long on the potty or toilet, two or three minutes is fine. Keep some toys handy to occupy them while they sit.
7. **Encourage boys to sit down to wee:** They might also need a poo and sitting down will help them to go. They may empty their bladder better sitting down too.
8. **Be consistent:** If your child is looked after by a relative or goes to nursery or a childminder make sure you let them know that you're starting potty training and the way you're planning to do it. It really helps if everyone who cares for your child is doing the same thing.
9. **Give lots of praise:** For each little step like sitting on the potty, washing hands and getting dressed. Rewards are a good incentive – make them small and instant, like a sticker.
10. **Be patient:** Potty training is a skill which may take some time to learn, so don't be surprised if there are lots of accidents to start with. You might decide your child isn't ready after all, in which case stop potty training and have another go in a few weeks.



Other problems that you may find

CHILDREN WHO WILL ONLY POO IN A NAPPY AND OTHER TOILET AVOIDERS

Children who will only poo in a nappy are completely normal. Lots of children go through a phase, usually soon after potty training has begun, when they refuse to poo in the potty or toilet and insist on using a nappy.

Other children go through a phase of refusing to wee in the potty or toilet. You'll find the information and techniques below will be relevant to them too.

Some boys and girls will work it out for themselves, but without intervention some would happily poo in a nappy for years.

Here are some tips to help you break the pooing in a nappy habit.

If your child insists on using a nappy to poo, **DON'T SAY NO**, or they will simply try to avoid pooing. Withholding the stools will lead to constipation – which is definitely something to avoid! Let them have the nappy on just to do their poo, and work on gradually changing their behaviour.

So, where do you start?

1. Constipation

Constipation often plays a part in potty/toilet avoidance. A big, hard, painful poo will scare the child, and to stop it happening again they simply hold on. Look at [ERIC's Guide to Children's Bowel Problems](#) for information on how to recognise if your child is constipated. Make sure any constipation is really well managed before attempting to change toileting behaviour.

2. Making the toilet less scary

Some children are frightened of the toilet itself. This fear will need to be overcome before they can start learning to sit on it. If your child is scared of the flush, start by flushing it while they stand by the bathroom door, then gradually ask them to come a little closer. When they are near enough, encourage them to put just a little bit of toilet paper in the toilet to flush away.

If they are worried about the water splashing back when they use the toilet, show them how to put a layer of toilet paper over the water in the toilet bowl.

Create a game with a few bottles of food colouring! Add a few drops to the cistern, then ask your child to guess what colour the water in the toilet will change to when they flush.

3. Learning to sit on the toilet

To start with, sitting on the potty/toilet should have nothing to do with pooing. The emphasis should be completely on relaxed, happy sitting – when you ask them to do so.

To start with this may be a five second sit, once a day, fully clothed. That's fine! Reward them for sitting and resist the temptation to mention wee or poo!

The key now is moving forward gradually, so each little step forward is an achievable goal. You plan when the toilet/potty sitting should take place – aim for 20-30 minutes after each meal as that is the best time to poo, and before bed. Make sure your child's bottom and feet are firmly supported – see the section 'How to get the poo in the loo' in [ERIC's Guide to Children's Bowel Problems](#). <https://www.eric.org.uk/guide-to-childrens-bowel-problems>

Over time you'll build up a regular toileting programme, with your child sitting on the potty/toilet for 5-10 minutes four times a day. Keep a bag of special toys in the bathroom ready so they look forward to exploring what's there whenever they sit on the loo.

Remember to reward every potty/toilet sit with your agreed system.

4. Next Steps

Once you've made sure your child is not constipated, and they can happily sit on the potty/toilet for 5-10 minutes, you're ready to begin working towards them pooing in the right place.

The key thing is to work out where they like to poo in their nappy, for example behind the sofa or in the corner of their bedroom, and where you want them to poo – on the potty/toilet. Put as many tiny steps as possible in between until eventually they reach the potty. Each step should be an achievable goal.

Be patient – this may take a long time, but it will be worth it!



- If you wish to find out more information you can visit the ERIC website – www.eric.org.uk and [ERIC's Helpline](http://eric.org.uk) (0845 370 8008).

POTTY TRAINING FLOWCHART

ASSESSMENT

Complete ERIC's Early Years Healthy Bladder and Bowel Assessment Chart.



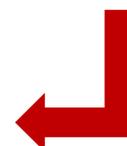
DRINKING

Child should drink minimum of 5 full cups of fluid at nursery during whole day session, or equivalent for part-day.

BOWELS

If poo problem is identified, discuss with family and provide signposting to [ERIC's Guide to Children's Bowel Problems](#).

GO!



THE BRISTOL STOOL CHART FOR CHILDREN

Choose your



Type 1



Looks like: Rabbit Droppings
Separate hard lumps. Like nuts (hard to pass)

Type 2



Looks like: Bunch of Grapes
Sausage-shaped, but lumpy

Type 3



Looks like: Corn on the Cob
Like a sausage but cracked on the surface

Type 4



Looks like: Sausage
Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft

Type 5



Looks like: Chicken Nuggets
Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)

Type 6



Looks like: Porridge
Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool

Type 7



Looks like: Gravy
Watery, no solid pieces ENTIRELY LIQUID

The most common bowel problem in children is constipation. Left untreated, or treated too gently, this can lead to soiling. Keep a check on your child's poo – it should be **Type 4** - soft and easy to pass.

How often should a child poo?

At least 4 times a week. Any less than this and the journey from mouth to bottom is taking too long – too much water is then absorbed and hard poo results – look overleaf. MORE than 3 times a day is not right either – it could look like **Type 7**. That might be diarrhoea but it could also be overflow caused by constipation! Read on to find out more...

What age can constipation start?

ANY age! Even babies can get constipated! Including those who are breast fed! Never wait for it to get better by itself...the longer it is left untreated the longer it takes to get better.



Concept by Professor DCA Candy and Emma Davoy, based on the Bristol Stool Form Scale produced by Dr KW Heaton, Reader in Medicine at the University of Bristol.
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Useful books

- "On My Potty" by Leslie Patricelli
- "I Want My Potty" (Little Princess) by Tony Ross
- "Once Upon a Potty" by Alona Frankel
- "Pirate Pete's and Princess Polly's Potty Book"
- "Everyone Poos" by Taro Gomi
- "Nappy Duck and Potty Piggy" by Bernette Ford
- "Who's In The Loo" by Jeanne Willis
- "Sam's Potty" by Barbara Lindgren
- "On Your Potty" By Virginia Miller
- "Where's The Poop" By Julie Markes