

Toilet training

Potty training is a really important transition for children, and something that most parents and carers are looking forward to after all those nappies. However it's also something that can cause some anxiety. The most important thing to note is there is no one size fits all approach and each child will be individual and different in the strategies that best suits them and that will therefore be most effective. In addition some children will take to using the potty or toilet really quickly while others may need a little more time. We often see girls becoming ready earlier than boys and they often get the hang of it quicker too.

How do I know when it's the right time?

You will want to be sure that your child is both emotionally and physical ready to start potty training, this is a big step for them. There is no set age as children's bladders mature at different ages. A good indicator is if a child can retain urine for a least an hour, so going from a dry nappy to a flood.



Follow your child's lead and look for signs that they are ready. They may begin to let you know when they have done a wee or poo in their nappy or tell you as they are doing it in their nappy. Some children will begin to fidget and take themselves off somewhere quiet when they need to go. Children will also often begin to start holding it in and telling you that they need to go to the toilet.

How do I start the process?

It's best not to start the process at times when your child may be unsettled, such as starting at a new childcare setting or moving house. Start slowly, taking it at their pace so as not to push them. If it's not going too well, don't be afraid to pause and try again later.

If it's possible you can let your child spend time without a nappy on during the day, keeping a potty to hand for them to use when needed. Let them know where it is and what it is for,

It's often easier if boys begin with sitting and then start standing up later on. children learn to recognise the signals in their bladder so it's important not to over remind the child as they need to learn to notice when their bladder is full.



If your child is hesitant or reluctant to sit on the potty, don't force them or make an issue of this. This can cause them to associate the potty with negative feelings, it might be that your child prefers a toddler seat directly on the toilet rather than a potty. There are lots of different variations of potty's and toilet seats, so have a look around.

You might like to introduce a book ([on your potty](#)) or a toy that will distract and encourage your child to sit on the potty for longer, this approach can also help them relax.

Giving your child praise and encouragement can help, however be careful not to over do this as this can lead to additional stress for the child to perform. The bladder needs to be relaxed in order to pass urine.

Accidents happen, if your child doesn't quite make it, don't worry or feel you need to discipline them, instead reassure them that they are okay and they can have a go next time.

Training pants or pullups can help, they aren't a simple replacement for a nappy, they don't soak up the urine in the same way as a nappy so your child will feel when they are wet. Encourage your child to keep their training pants dry throughout the day.

Focus on getting your child dry during the day before you ask them to master night time potty training. Once they are confident in the day you can begin thinking about the night time toilet training. When you begin to notice your child's nappies or pullups are dry for a few mornings in a row you might want to start taking them off for bedtime too. Make sure your child goes to the toilet last thing before bed. Keep the potty close by so they can use it in the night if they need to. Accidents do and will happen so grab a waterproof mattress protector. Just like day time training, take it at your child pace, don't be afraid to pause and try again at another time if you feel you need to.

Every child is unique and they will master the toilet in their own way, please don't lose heart if things don't quite go to plan. It is really common for children to have periods of regression, just as you thought you had cracked it. It's also really common for children to have mastered it in one place (home) but struggle in another (childcare setting). Make sure you discuss your approach with other settings, working in partnership with your childminder or nursery will ensure a consistent approach. Take things at the pace of your child offering support and encouragement along the way.