

Potty Training Your Child

In my experience with potty training children in child care it is usually most successful around the age of 3 for girls and 3^{1/2} for boys. If you feel your little one is ready, I would like to share with you some ideas to help the process.

First, let's define a Potty Trained Child.

They must:

1. Be able to TELL the adult they have to go potty BEFORE they have to go.
2. They must be able to say the words "I have to go potty" BEFORE they have to go.
3. Be able to pull down their underwear and pants and get them back up without assistance.
4. Be able to wipe themselves after using the toilet.
5. Be able to get off the potty by themselves.
6. Be able to wash and dry hands.
7. Be able to go directly back to the room without directions.
8. Be able to postpone going if they must wait for someone who is in the bathroom or if we are outside and away from the house.

Is your child ready to begin training?

Sometimes parents feel that if their child is able to actually pee on a potty at home when the parent places them on the potty that this is the sign they are ready to train. From my experience this is not necessarily a sign. I have seen many children who are able to do this who actually trained more than a year after they were able to do this.

Another misconception is that if a child tells you that they have peed or pooped in their diaper that it's a sign that they are ready to train. I haven't seen ANY correlation to a child's awareness AFTER they have gone to their ability to recognize and act BEFORE they have to go.

I believe that potty training is five percent ability to get their clothes on and off, five percent ability to go pee or poop in the potty and NINETY percent being able to identify when they have to go and telling the adult BEFORE they have to go.

What you CAN do to get your child ready to train:

- Start reading potty books and talking about going potty in the big girl or big boy potty during changing.
- Have them sit on the potty at transition times (i.e. before/after meals, before/after naps)
- Practice with them getting their pants up and down on their own and hand washing.
- Watch for signs that they have to go or are going and get them off to the potty.
- Keep close communication with the me about any indicators suggesting the child is ready.

Some things you should NOT do:

- Don't limit food or drinks to only be given at certain times. Maintain the same food and snack schedule during training.
- Do not put your child on a potty schedule where they go every half hour or hour. It's very time consuming with little to no benefit. I have seen this cause many problems with children not being able to hold much urine and having to constantly go to the potty further along down the line. They are able to settle down at nap because once they relax and have a little bit of pee they have to get up and go. They can't do walks because they can't make it very long without having to come back to potty.

Helpful Hints for Home

There are some easy daily things you can do at home that will really help your child's progression. Some of these may sound silly but trust the ole Fat Nan... they REALLY work.

- Be cheery about the potty. A happy experience each time they are on the potty will translate into quick training at home.
- If there are two adults in the house have each adult "ask" the other adult if he/she can go to the potty at least four or five times a day. Your child seeing and hearing you "ask" if you can go will get the idea in their head that they need to do that too.
- Praise the child on success for every step of the process but do not overdo it. You don't want them trying to do the potty thing fifty times a day to get your attention or get rewarded. A "way to go" or a "thumbs up" and big smile will let them know you are proud. We use the phrase "you go potty like the BIG boys/girls do!!!! They love the idea of being BIG.
- Bribery can be a good thing. Use stickers or small treats (like gummies, jelly beans, teddy grahams) ONLY after potty success. Have the child give the same treat to everyone around him that can have the treat. Passing a treat for his success will make the child happier than getting the treat himself. Every person receiving the prize could say "Good job little buddy... you go potty like the big boys do".
- Let the child in the bathroom with you when you are going potty. This is really important for the same sex parent. Let them see how it works and you washing up afterwards.
- Don't let them play with the toilet paper. If they are infatuated with toilet paper give them a couple of generic cheapo rolls to play around with in the house to get it out of their system.
- No punishment or consternation for accidents. Just talk to them about them needing to ask to go to the potty next time. Say "next time you will go potty like the BIG boys do... okay?!!"
- If you see them mid-way trying to poop or pee scurry them off to the potty to finish up.
- Give your child three or four minutes to get the job done. It shouldn't take more than a few minutes. Don't let it turn into an attention seeking time where the child gets you to one to one them. It's only about going potty. If they don't go in a reasonable time tell them it's time to get off and we will try again another time.
- Don't allow potty time to be a stall tactic to avoid doing something the child doesn't want to do. We see this here at toy pick up and nap time. Some kids will claim they have to go potty to avoid having to go to bed. If you see a pattern of avoidance have the child do the potty a little bit before you want them to do whatever they are avoiding so it doesn't interfere.
- I don't encourage any toys or books during the training time. It really can backfire on you. Potty time will quickly turn into one to one attention and play time for the child. After a child has been trained for a few months you can add a book for them to look at if they are having a hard time going poop.
- Don't be in the potty room with your child. They will use the time to get undivided attention. If you do have to be in there for their safety, keep attention and interaction during potty time to a bare minimum. If your child is generally doinking around during the time he/she is sitting on the potty then turn away from them and keep the eye contact down. Keep the atmosphere calm and focused.
- Please train boys sitting down first. Switch them to standing up when they are tall enough to reach over the seat and adept enough to aim.
- Be careful of public automatic flushing toilets. The noise of the flushing will scare them. If you bring a little post-it note with you when you go out you can put it over the sensor so the toilet doesn't automatically flush right when your child gets off of it.
- Have fun. Stay cool. It will all work out.

Here at Preschool

I will work with you on potty training after you have **about 50% success over 3 days at home**. If, before training has begun, your child expresses to me the desire to use the toilet, I will accommodate them. Until then, please diaper or put pull-ups on them.

Children should wear pull-ups and easy on/off pants during training. I prefer elastic waisted pants or shorts until they are physically capable of doing snaps and buttons. Please don't send them in anything that requires me to remove the top to get to the bottom and I don't allow long skirts, overalls, belts or suspenders while training.

All boys are required to sit down. Please teach them to be "seated gentlemen" and to point their penis down into the bowl. They won't have good control of the stream for a few years anyway. I've had urine on the vanity, on the walls next to and behind the toilet. I have also had to comfort upset children because of urine soaked socks after stepping into a puddle in front of the toilet.

I have found that a number of kids are easily potty trained during long vacations and holiday breaks. The parents have the time to do the intense work and supervision. You can allow the child to be in underwear for many consecutive days. If they are successful at home they still must remain in pull-ups and be accident free for two weeks HERE.

Please don't expect the same performance here as at home.

I've seen both ends of the spectrum with kids ability to be "trained" here and not at home and vice versa. I've had kids who have been successful at home and are unable to do it here for a number of reasons:

- Kids are not trained at home to tell the parents they have to go BEFORE they have to go but rather are allowed free access unsupervised to the bathroom in their home. Again, here they must tell us BEFORE. They can't leave the playroom without an adult and go into the bathroom without supervision.
- There are many more distractions here with a larger group of kids, toys, and bustling activities.
- They need one to one attention throughout the day in order to keep up with the toileting. Here we have multi-level aged children who have various needs and supervision requirements. We can't focus on one child but must divide our attention with all the kids. This is another reason your child must tell us he/she has to go. They need to bring it to OUR attention. We can't focus only on them to pick up cues, sign language, or specific behaviors to tell us it is time.
- Parents are putting the child on the potty in small time increments. We don't do this here so the child will wet themselves many times throughout the day if this is being done at home.

I've also had kids who are successful here but will not do it at home. This can happen if:

- The child is on the go a lot in the evenings and weekends making it difficult for the parent to do toileting practice at home.
- Children are with different caregivers on the weekend who don't continue the practicing. Parents want the training to be done at day care during the day and do diapers and pull-ups at home on the weekends.
- We have had a number of children who train a full year at home before they train here or train here a full year before they train at home. It is best when it is done at the same time but don't be worried if the child is successful only with you.

I do not allow children into underwear until they have been COMPLETELY accident free HERE for two full weeks. This is an absolute non-negotiable policy. I have potty trained many children over the years and have found that once a child is successful for two full weeks HERE it is rare if not unheard of for them to have accidents thereafter. I haven't had a potty training accident here in over five years. This is because this policy is strictly enforced.

The reason I have this policy is because over the years I have trained many kids. I have to set up policies that maintain infection control standards for the child care and protect the carpet, furniture, and inventory of the child care. I have to have higher standards than a parent has at home to avoid having to do frequent carpet and furniture cleaning and replacements.

Often when kids have accidents it isn't discovered immediately and they end up wetting down their leg and soaking their socks. I am not literally keeping my eyes directly on just one child every second so it could go unnoticed. Once the child sits down or walks around a bit in the playroom you quickly have an entire room with urine soaked footsteps and big soaked spots from the child sitting. It only takes a few minutes of free playing to cover the room completely. Once it's discovered, I have to have the entire room cleaned.

When children soil their underwear, it is a very big mess to clean up. Often the poop will soak thru their clothes and cause the same problems the pee accidents cause. It may require professional cleaning and takes more time to deal with then the cost of diapers for a week.

Naptime training:

Sometimes kids nap-train right away when they are awake-time trained. Most children are not able to do this and it is many months and sometimes years before they are nap-trained. I require nap diapers or pull-ups until the child has slept through nap for one full month without an accident.