



Toileting Training Advice



Below is some information about the Acorn/Oakleigh ASC approach to toilet training.

It can be quite daunting to think about toilet training a young child with Autism/Severe Learning Difficulties. Some of the children are difficult to toilet train for the following reasons;

- The nappy is the place where they have always gone to the toilet. It is their toilet. It feels safe, so why change a habit of a life time?
- The children may therefore never show readiness for toilet training.
- They have no need to change from the nappy to a toilet. So we have to help them relocate their toileting place.
- They have difficulty generalizing their skills. They use a nappy or one toilet only. When we begin toilet training, it is therefore important to use different toilets as quickly as possible to help the children understand that that all toilets can be used, not just one.
- When first taken into the toilet area and sat on the toilet, they do not understand what is expected of them. Some children are frightened of the big hole in the toilet, others find the coldness of the seat upsetting. It is not until they actually use the toilet and this usually happens by chance at first, do they understand why they are there.
- Due to their communication difficulties, it is hard to explain to children why they are sitting on the toilet and what they are expected to do. Again, it is the first "accidental" use of the toilet that will help to make the connection.

So where do we begin?

There are lots of things that we need to do for the children before we even take off their nappies.

We need to prepare them for toilet training.

From an early age, start changing your child in the toilet. Pop them on the toilet and count quickly 1,2,3, and then off they come. This will desensitise them to the toilet area, as well as sitting on the toilet and become a comfortable and safe place to be.

Introduce toileting as a natural part of their daily routine. For example, when they get up, mid-morning, before and after lunch, before bath time and bedtime, take them into the toilet, as above.

If the child has an individual time table, put the toilet symbol on the time table. We use one symbol only so they children learn the symbol means the toilet.

Think about the clothes they wear. For boys and girls, jogging pants or track suit bottoms are ideal, as they are easy for the children to pull up and down.

Start putting pants/knickers over the nappy when you dress your child each day, so they can practise pulling up and down.

Get organised! Keep a bag for soiled clothes in the bathroom and a pile of clean clothes too. This way when little mishaps happen, you can quickly remove wet clothes and redress with little interruptions. This keeps the focus on learning to use the toilet. Also, we do not want the children to learn to dress and undress in the toilet every time they go.

Here's How To Start;

- Think about the toilet area. Remove unnecessary distractions. You may need a child seat to help your child feel safe on the toilet. A little stool will give them independence and allow them to feel secure when sitting, as they can place their feet on the stool. There are a variety of products available on the market too to consider.
- Dry Nights changing mats or incontinence pads are available to place on furniture or in a car seat to protect against accidents.
- Before going to the toilet, show the symbol of the toilet and say "toilet". It will be helpful to have the symbol on the door of the toilet. As we practise more and more, we can encourage the children to give us the symbol, by guiding them hand over hand, to put the symbol in our hands. This takes practise and time, and will develop more naturally if your child is a PECS user. In time, and with growing independence, the children may develop this skill and bring the symbol to us if they want the toilet.
- Encourage your child to pull down their trousers, and pants. Keep your language to a minimum. "Trousers down" "Pants down". At first the children will find this difficult. Stand behind them, place your hands over theirs, and pull down together. It's easier from behind as the children then naturally bend forward.

is harder to change these behaviours. If necessary, move the settee, and roll up the rug.

Remember while your child is at Oakleigh, we are always here to help and to give advice. During the toilet training progress, it's really helpful to send in a big bag full of spare, (NAMED) trousers/skirts, pants/knickers, and socks. Little jelly shoes or "crocs" are good too as they can be washed if we have little accidents.

To be successful you need to be very patient and consistent. There will be lots of washing and mopping, but perhaps less than you think. Eventually you will be free of nappies and your child will have gained a lifelong skill, personal dignity and independence.

Sandra Down. Deputy Head of Oakleigh School

Written in conjunction with the Home Support Workers for Acorn and Oakleigh, Class Teachers Emily Warton and Trish Moysey and Area Senco Team members.



ATTENTION

START READING AT THE
BOTTOM OF THE PAGE!

NIGHT TIME

When your child is reliably dry during the day you can start thinking about night times. PREPARATION is important - watch out for dry nappies in the morning, and get your child used to stopping drinks an hour before bed and sitting on the potty just before sleep. Protect the bed with a waterproof sheet; put a gentle light by the bed and practise getting to the potty or toilet. Make sure your child can pull their pyjamas up and down easily and have fresh pyjamas and bedding ready to deal with any wetting. Some children take much longer to learn night time dryness - check out ERIC's *Guide to Night Time Wetting* if bedwetting persists.

WIPING

Something else to learn... how much paper to use and how to get clean. This step often takes lots of practice and encouragement. Wet wipes and/or coloured or patterned toilet paper can help.

GOING OUT!

Once things are going well at home it's time to go out in pants. Keep the first trips short, plan where you're going and make sure you always know where the nearest toilet is. Take everything you need with you - potty, wipes, changes of clothes.

DON'T TRY AND ADD THE TOP BLOCKS UNTIL YOU'VE GOT A GOOD ROUTINE GOING AND YOU'VE MADE SOME PROGRESS!

GETTING GOING!

Goodbye nappies, hello pants! Don't substitute pull-ups for nappies...they are just a different shaped version of the same thing. You can't potty train in a nappy or a pull-up, so choose the right day and stop using them!

Build up a routine. Don't ask your child if they need a wee or poo - they haven't learnt to recognise that yet. Simply say "it's potty time" every couple of hours.

Keep a bag of toys ready to play with while they're on the potty so they remain happy to sit for 2 or 3 minutes. Use the bathroom whenever possible.

Make it a special time for you both - the whole experience will be much more positive if you invest time to learn together.

Encourage boys to sit down to wee, if not they can forget they need a poo! They may empty their bladder better sitting down too.

Give lots of praise for sitting on the potty, and for each little step like washing hands and getting dressed.

Rewards are a good incentive - but make them small and instant, like a sticker. Reward achievable tasks like sitting on the potty rather than staying clean and dry, which they might not manage at first. If the leap is too great, use Dry Like Me pads to help catch the mess and keep that nappy off! This helps the child learn too...the pad bulks up and helps them to recognise when they're wet.

CLOTHES

Choose clothes that are easy to pull up and down - avoid fiddly zips and buttons. Practise getting dressed and undressed.

Choose clothes that are easy to wash and dry...accidents WILL happen.

PANTS

Choose pants with your child. Buy lots...they WILL have accidents. Practise wearing them for short periods to get used to the feeling.

THE POTTY

Choose a potty with your child.

Keep it in the bathroom and practise sitting on it. Consider having a second potty downstairs if your only bathroom is upstairs.

THE TOILET

If a potty is not suitable, choose a children's toilet seat together, and a step or box that is high enough to provide firm support under the child's feet while they sit on the toilet.



WHAT TO DO IF IT ALL GOES WRONG!
Don't be surprised if initially a lot of wee and poo ends up in the child's pants instead of the potty - think of it as part of the learning process. Potty training is a skill which may take some time to achieve.
Be matter of fact and just deal with it...and praise them when they get it right.
You may however decide they are just not ready the first time you try. If so, don't chop and change between pants and nappies, just STOP for a few weeks.
Go back to the 'Getting ready' stage, then check out the info on the bottom blocks. If you haven't got a secure base your potty training tower will fall down again! Make sure you're well prepared and plan when to start again.

WHAT IF THE CHILD WILL ONLY POO IN A NAPPY?
In the short term, if they ask for a nappy to do their poo in then let them. Otherwise they are very likely to hold onto their poo and the vicious cycle of constipation will begin.
Constipation may already be playing a part; hard stools will cause discomfort and make your child reluctant to poo. Read ERIC's *Guide to Children's Bowel Problems* for more information.
Some children are simply frightened of the poo falling into the potty or toilet. Give them lots of reassurance, but be firm that the place poos happen is in the bathroom. Involve them in bottom wiping and emptying the nappy into the toilet.
Then aim to move them very gradually towards removing the nappy - first by sitting on the potty/toilet more every day, moving it away from their bottom bit by bit.

WHAT SHOULD YOUR CHILD DRINK?

The most important way to ensure healthy bladder and bowels is to check your child has plenty of fluids - a minimum of 6-8 drinks every day.

Water is best.

2-3 drinks of milk a day is fine as part of a balanced diet.

Well diluted fruit juice or squash can be included.

WHAT DRINKS SHOULD THEY AVOID?

Any drinks containing caffeine - like tea, coffee and cola.

Sweetened drinks.

Save fizzy drinks for a treat when they are older!

Don't limit their drinks to help them stay dry...it doesn't work! The bladder needs to be properly filled and emptied to behave properly.

MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD IS NOT CONSTIPATED

Your child should pass soft stools at least four times a week. If they are passing fewer poos than this, and/or harder poos, they might be constipated...

Leaking runny poo can also mean constipation...

... check out the ERIC website or read the leaflet *ERIC's Guide to Children's Bowel Problems* for more information



THAT'S RIGHT,
START HERE!

