


No More Diapers: Is Your Child Ready?





“No more diapers!” Sounds great, but how do you get ready for toilet training? Here are some tips.

 **Be sure you are ready!** Helping your child learn to use the toilet takes time and patience. Have a potty chair, a child-sized seat that fits the toilet, and a sturdy stepstool on hand. Training can take 3 months or more. If you start during warm weather, your child can wear fewer clothes—and you’ll have fewer clothes to wash!

 **Get your child interested!**

- Let her get to know her potty chair or portable toilet seat. Let her sit on it fully clothed, if she wants.
- Check out children’s books about using the potty, and read them with your child [e.g., *Everyone Poops* by Taro Gomi (1993) and *Going to the Potty* by Fred Rogers (1986)].
- Let him observe you or other children (if they are willing) using the toilet.
- Show him how the toilet works. Let him flush it if he wants. (Note: To avoid messes, make the bathroom “off limits” to the toddler unless someone else accompanies him!)

 **Teach the right words.** Use the terms you want your child to use. You might say in a friendly voice, “I’m changing your diaper because you peed in it.” “You pooped in your diaper, so I’m putting on a clean one.” Use terms that other people will understand.

 **Watch for signs that your child is ready.** Most children learn to use the toilet between 2 and 3 years of age, but some learn later. Children may show some signs of readiness at around 18 months. Girls show signs of readiness an average of 3 months before boys. Your child may be ready to start toilet training if she shows any of the following signs:

- knows the diaper is wet or dirty and wants a clean one
- has bowel movements at regular times
- stays dry for 2 hours at a time
- can pull down her own diaper or underpants
- uses facial expressions, sounds, or words to show she is ready to urinate or have a bowel movement
- understands the terms you use for bladder and bowel functions
- can follow simple directions and likes to put things in the right place

 **Be aware of signs that your child is not ready.** You may need to wait a little longer if he simply doesn’t want to sit on the toilet or if he is going through any of the following:

- an illness
- a phase of irritability or power struggles with you
- major life changes such as the birth of a new baby or moving to a new home

 **For related Web resources, see “No More Diapers: Is Your Child Ready?” at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.**



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