



Create a Potty Training Plan for Your Child

Having potty-training plan for your child and knowing the best time to start it can make the toilet training process go more smoothly. But there are certain universal rules relating to toilet training—as well as to other aspects of parenting—that will enhance your family's experience no matter what method you choose. Some important points to remember:



- **Be positive.** Children learn best when they are praised for their progress rather than punished for their mistakes. Do what you can to help your child succeed as often as possible—even if it means learning gradually, one tiny step at a time. When they progress, give them a hug, some praise, and perhaps even a small tangible reward. When they fail, tell them you're sure they'll do better next time and ask them to help you clean up.
- **Try to be as consistent as possible.** Create reasonable expectations according to your child's abilities, express them clearly and frequently, and expect your child to at least try to follow them every time. Keep their bathroom routine as consistent as possible, with their potty in the same place every day and the sequence of actions—including wiping and hand washing—the same every time. While they are toilet-training, praise your child for each success, and provide predictable, nonpunitive consequences (such as helping to clean up) for each failure. Make sure that your approach to toilet training is consistent with those of your child's other caregivers as well.
- **Stay involved and observe.** Very young children's needs, behaviors, and abilities change frequently and, to some extent, unpredictably. Toilet-training approaches that worked two weeks ago may not work today, and skills that your child mastered in the past may temporarily disappear in the face of new challenges. Continue to monitor your child's bathroom behavior throughout toilet training and afterward so that you can quickly identify and resolve any new problems that arise.
- **Enjoy.** Toilet training is a necessary chore, but it can also be fun at times. Don't take your child's hesitations, passing fears, or resistance too seriously. Nearly every child learns to use the toilet sooner or later, and your child will, too. Do what you can to occasionally take your eye off the long-term goal and enjoy the charming, funny moments along the way.

A potty-training plan of your child's own

If you are concerned that designing a potty-training plan to suit your particular child may prove more difficult than following a prepackaged, one-size-fits-all program, keep in mind the advantages. It doesn't take a great deal of effort to figure out whether your child is more a talker or a doer, or a lover of adult-imposed routine or an independent soul who prefers to control their own actions. In the process of figuring that out, you and your child will have gotten to know each other better. Plus, your child will have learned a new skill in a way that increased their confidence, their sense of security, and their self-esteem. What a wonderful process to have been a part of!

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