

## Potty Training Tips

**Schedule bathroom breaks.** Your child will need to regularly attempt to use the toilet. Start this as frequently as possible – 30-60 minutes at a time. This will increase the chance for success of voiding in the toilet.

- Look for patterns in when your child has accidents. It can help to write down the time and place of each accident for several days. You may start to see a pattern emerge. For example, you may find that she often urinates around 30 minutes after drinking a glass of water, milk or other beverage. Use this information to schedule her bathroom trips around times she seems most likely to pee.
- You can also look for signs that your child needs to use the bathroom. You may start to see an increase in rocking, holding oneself, more vocalizations, “hiding”, or other signs that she’s ready for a trip to the bathroom. You will also start to recognize when your child is wet and if they are already on a schedule their own and then work around that.

**When it comes to communication: less is more!** Use clear and simple pictures or visual prompts (see example below)

- Use the visual prompt with simple and direct language to help your child understand what is expected. For example, say “Time for potty” instead of asking “Do you need to use the potty now?”
- It is most effective when parents present the verbal direction with the visual support while immediately guiding the child to the toilet.



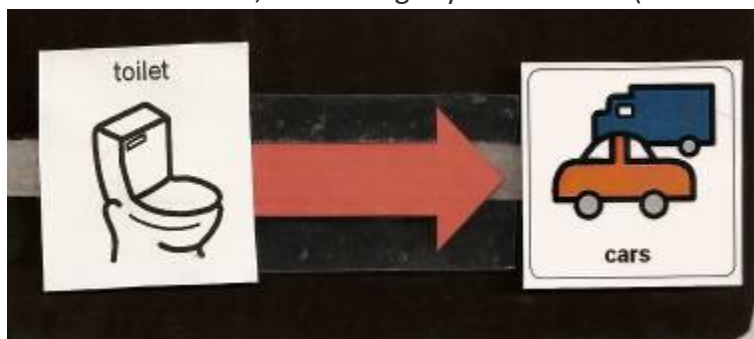
**Don’t delay the underwear!** Move your child into underwear as soon as possible. This seems like an intimidating step for many parents, but it can be helpful. For some kids, diapers and pull-ups can be *too* good at whisking away the pee. As a result, your child may not even realize that she has urinated. Putting your child in underwear helps her associate accidents with the discomfort of wetness on his skin.

**Don’t fuss over accidents.** When your child does have an accident, minimize discussing or fussing that can have the unintended result of reinforcing the accident behavior. Instead, provide a brief reminder that you expect your child to use the toilet next time she needs to go.

Then complete the cleanup with as little fanfare and discussion as possible. Save your attention for when your child is using – or attempting to use – the toilet.

**Reward the desired behaviors.** Identify some activities, toys or small treats that will motivate your child. Reserve these for rewarding your child’s toileting successes, and *only* for rewarding toileting success. Chances are your child will work harder at achieving success if she can’t get these items any other way.

- Importantly, deliver the rewards as soon as possible after your child uses the toilet to pee or poop. Don’t wait! Quick delivery of the reward is best!
- And remember those visual supports. For example, you can incorporate a picture of the reward in your child’s toileting visual schedule. OR use a “First-Then” board to illustrate “First use the toilet, and then get your reward.” (See example below.)



- In the early stages of training, reward each small success – even a small dribble of urine. These are important behaviors that you can build upon during future bathroom trips.

**Use rewards to communicate.** Sometimes, rewards can help you communicate your expectations to your child. This is especially important for children who have difficulty understanding “if, then” rules. For example, your child may not understand, “If you pee in the potty, you can have 5 minutes of iPad.” She may do better if you increase the opportunities for success and reward. How? Try the following:

- On a day you are both at home, increase the fluids she drinks. This will give you more chances to take her to the bathroom for a successful pee. Reward each tinkle!
- Remember to make those rewards immediate and consistent. This increases the chances that your child makes the connection between peeing and receiving her reward.

**Empower your child to communicate.** It’s especially important to help children with limited verbal abilities to signal their need to use the toilet. Once your child is consistently using the toilet when you bring her to the bathroom, it’s time to teach her a simple way to tell you she needs “to go.”

- Consider encouraging her to use a visual support such as a picture of a toilet. This could be a picture in the house or her PODD book.
- Look for signs listed above (rocking, holding herself, hiding, etc)
- Sometimes a child may simply look intently at you – or toward the bathroom – when he or she needs to go. It’s particularly helpful for parents, teachers and other caregivers to

become sensitive to these “tells” and immediately encourage the child to use the chosen communication method. This can be with whatever method works best – e.g., handing you the toilet picture, saying “potty”, or pointing.

- Definitely reward your child for any effort to communicate.