

Toilet training

Toilet training is your baby or child learning to use the **potty** or **toilet** instead of a nappy. [Research](#) shows it is better for your child's bladder and bowel health to **stop using nappies between 18 and 30 months**. Most children can master potty training from around 18 months and can usually wipe themselves clean by the time they start school.



Starting out – from 6-9 months

- ✓ Give your baby or child healthy food and milk to help promote a healthy bowel and bladder. When introducing solids also offer water in a cup.
- ✓ Check they are passing soft poo every day. If you think your baby or child might be constipated, it is important to get help with this before stopping nappies.
- ✓ Start by sitting your baby or child on the potty once or twice a day.
- ✓ You can help to support your baby with sitting if needed – start with a few seconds of sitting and slowly build up to 2–3 minutes
- ✓ Try to change nappies as soon as they are wet or soiled. This teaches your baby that it is healthy to be clean and dry.
- ✓ If you can, change your baby in the bathroom to help them link it with wees and poos.
- ✓ Empty the poo from your baby's nappy or potty into the toilet and flush it away together.
- ✓ Let your baby or child have some nappy-free time for 30 minutes after they have done a wee or poo. This will help them get used to not wearing it, without having an accident.



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

- ✓ If your baby or child has Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), you don't need to wait to start toilet training.
- ✓ Almost all children can learn to be clean and dry.
- ✓ The longer children wear nappies, the harder it can be to try a new place for them to wee and poo. Try not to delay toilet training.
- ✓ Toilet training is about learning skills, and these can be taught with extra help and a clear routine.

Supportive aids can help such as:

- Potty chairs with side support
 - Step stools or footrests
 - Armrests or grab rails
 - Back rests
 - Soft padded seats
 - Charts, pictures or social stories
- ✓ If your baby or child has autism, Down Syndrome, or other needs, there are helpful guides to support you:
 - [Potty and toilet training for children with additional needs and disabilities](#)
 - [pants4school](#)
 - [Potty training children with additional needs - ERIC](#)



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Top tips for toilet training

1. Keeping calm and patient can help your child learn how to use the potty or toilet more easily and quickly.
2. Every baby and child is different - try not to compare.
3. Toilet training takes time to practise and learn new skills.



Step 1: Practise sitting on the potty or toilet:

- Before you stop using nappies, help your baby or child get used to sitting on the potty or toilet. This will help them feel more confident and know what to do.
- Get a potty or toilet seat insert and a step to support them sitting on the toilet.

Good times to try sitting on a potty or toilet are:

- ✓ Shortly after they wake up
- ✓ After mealtimes or a feed
- ✓ Anytime you know your baby or child needs to go (you see them straining for a poo).
- When your child can stand, change their nappy standing up. Whilst changing them, talk to them

about wee and poo and how our body feels.

- Let them see you use the toilet, so they learn it's nothing to be afraid of.
- Use kind words. Don't say poo is "smelly" or "stinky."
- Help your child to learn how to dress, undress, wipe themselves, and wash their hands.
- Help your child to feel wet when they have a wee. Try cloth training pants or a small reusable cloth in their nappy.
- Help your baby or child learn through play. Use toys, books, and games about potty or toilet training.
- Praise your baby or child after using or trying the potty or toilet. Celebrate small wins to make them feel proud and keep trying.

Step 2: Stopping nappies:

- Choose a few quiet days at home to start to help your child get used to the change. Avoid times with big routine changes.
- Taking off nappies in the summer can make things easier, but don't delay toilet training just because it's not summertime.
- When you're ready, tell your child it's time to stop using nappies. Help them say goodbye and explain they'll now use the potty or toilet for wees and poos.
- Dress your child in clothes that are easy for them

to get on and off, so they can take the lead with using the potty or toilet.

- For boys, start by sitting on the potty for wees and poos. It helps empty the bladder and prevent constipation.
- Watch for signs like fidgeting or hiding. Gently guide them to the potty or toilet.
- Avoid asking too often. Wait for signs, then gently say, "It's toilet time" or "Let's get that wee (or poo) in the potty!"



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Step 3: Sticking with it:

- Be consistent. Stay home for a few quiet days when you first stop using nappies.
- If you go out, take the potty with you.
- If you put a nappy back on when you go out, this could confuse your child. They may think it's okay to wee or poo in nappies sometimes.

✓ Expect accidents as they learn:

- Have spare clothes ready.
- Use covers or puppy training pads.
- Clean up together and remind about the potty.
- Stay calm. Don't shame or punish as this can make it harder for you and your child to learn together.



✓ Nighttime:

- Some children stay dry during nighttime soon after becoming dry during daytime. Others may still wet after age 5 years and may need an assessment
- It is not your child's fault if they wet during sleep.
- If your child isn't dry at night by age 5, speak to your health visitor, school nurse or healthcare professional.

✓ When to ask for help from your health visitor:

1. You feel unsure about how to start or what to do next.
2. Your baby or child has special educational needs and disabilities.
3. Constipation or pain is making toilet training hard.
4. Your baby or child is afraid of the potty or toilet.
5. You are worried about toilet training.



✓ Need more information?

Try:

- [Bowel and Bladder UK](#)
- [ERIC - Potty training problems](#)