

Lil Bits of Heaven on Earth Toilet-training Policy

Toilet training is a big step in a child's development! Many parents feel pressured to potty train at an early age, but I prefer to wait until the child has shown an interest and has reached several developmental milestones. For best results, I find that waiting until the summer closest to the child's third birthday to start potty-training is most effective.

Readiness signs:

1. Your child announces when a wet or soiled diaper has occurred, and/or requests to have it changed. This shows awareness of bodily function, and also that the child dislikes the feel of a wet or soiled diaper.
2. Your child can express and understand one-word statements, including such words as "wet," "dry," "potty," and "go."
3. Your child shows an interest in the toilet or potty-seat by asking to use the potty or wanting to watch Mommy or Daddy use it.
4. Your child has a tendency to wet or soil their diapers at about the same time period each day, and often remains dry for longer periods (2 hours or more) during some parts of the day.
5. Your child shows facial expressions when wetting or soiling their diaper and may even hide in a corner or behind the couch or squat when soiling a diaper. This again shows awareness of bodily functions.
6. Your child is able to undress without assistance to some degree. This shows the child has some of the physical coordination needed to do the work of toileting.
7. Your child is cooperative and shows an interest in pleasing parents and caregivers.

Once several of these readiness signs have been consistently observed for a few months, then it is reasonable to consider potty-training. However, even if the child acts curious about toileting and expresses a dislike for soiled or wet diapers, that alone is not enough of an indication that the child will respond well to toilet training. If the child is not interested in cooperating and following directions, then all the curiosity in the world will not prepare him or her for successful potty-training. If a child is not bothered by a wet or dirty diaper, if she is uninterested or unwilling to sit on the potty, believe me, you are not going to get very far! A stubborn child may be physically capable of toileting, but will not successfully train unless willing to follow directions. In this case, it is best not to try training, but rather to wait a few months to see if the child is more willing to cooperate at a later time.

Also, if there are any major changes in the child's life (such as arrival of a new sibling, loss of a parent, a new care provider, moving to a new house, changes in the parent's work schedule, etc.) it is best to wait a few months until things have stabilized again before starting the potty training process. Starting to potty train during a turbulent time in the child's and/or parents' life only sets the stage for failure and frustration for everyone.

Assuming that the timing is right, the first steps to toilet training include helping the child become self-sufficient. It is important for true independence in toileting that the child be able to first dress and undress without assistance. This can be facilitated by carefully choosing clothing that is easy for the child to handle, such as pants that are slightly larger

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than would otherwise be chosen, avoiding overalls and outfits that have lots of buttons, snaps, zippers, etc. Simple pull-on elastic-waist pants or skirts are the best choice, as are shirts that do not snap at the crotch. Even while the child is still wearing diapers, it is good to transition to looser-fitting clothing that the child can self-adjust in order to gain practice and confidence prior to toilet-training.

There are many methods of potty-training, most of which will work fine when the child is truly ready. It's just a matter of practice and patience. Some of the best books on the subject that I have found are:

1. Toilet Training in Less Than a Day, by Nathan H. Azrin, Richard M. Foxx
2. Parents' Book of Toilet Teaching, by Joanna Cole
3. Toilet Training Without Tears, by Charles E. Schaefer and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo
4. Toilet Training, by Vicky Lansky

Also there are lots of great books for children which present the ideas of toilet training in a non-threatening way, including:

1. What to Expect When You Use the Potty, by Heidi Murkoff
2. Koko Bear's New Potty, by Vicky Lansky
3. Once Upon a Potty – (Girl and Boy versions), by Alona Frankel

When deciding to start toilet-training, I suggest you start by reading one or more of these books on the subject, and then choosing a convenient time when you can dedicate your full attention to your child for a period of at least several days. For example, a long weekend when you won't be traveling or entertaining guests, or even a full week of vacation (if you're lucky enough to have that to spare!). Read up and develop your plans ahead of this time, then prepare to devote yourself fully to this process for the time you have allotted. It's good to also talk to your child ahead of this time about the idea of learning to go potty, presenting it as a positive thing.

Once you have identified that your child is ready, interested, and cooperative, and that you have the time to devote to this, choose your time to start and stick to it. Some parents have found it helpful to tell their child "little fibs" like "the store is out of diapers" or "they don't make diapers in your size anymore" in order to reinforce that there will be no more diapers. This also takes some of the pressure off of Mom and Dad to say why this is the way it's going to be. In any case, once you start, don't go back. This will only serve to confuse your child and lengthen the time required to complete the potty training process.

Ideally, it would be great to have your child stay at home during this training period, preferably until your child has been completely accident-free for at least two weeks. However, since most parents don't have that option, I require that the child wear pull-ups at daycare until "success" has been achieved at home for at least two solid weeks of evenings and weekends. This means *no accidents at all* at home for at least two weeks straight.

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Although I wish I could offer each of my clients the service of potty-training their children for them, I simply cannot do that while also providing quality care to the other children in my group. For this reason, I also cannot *on a regular basis* deal with cleaning up potty accidents while your child is learning to use the potty independently. Your child must go through toilet training at home, under your instruction and guidance. Your child must be **successfully** potty-trained before I can allow him or her to stop wearing pull-ups at daycare. I will, however have a potty-chair available for independent use, but I simply do not have the resources to ensure your child is completely trained otherwise.

Being successfully potty-trained means:

1. Your child is able to announce when he or she needs to go potty.
2. Your child is able to get to the bathroom without assistance.
3. Your child is able to pull down his or her pants without assistance.
4. Your child is able to pull down his or her underpants without assistance.
5. Your child is able to sit on the potty seat without assistance.
6. Your child is able to pee and/or poop in the potty.
7. Your child is able to decide when he or she is finished going potty (i.e. when the flow of urine is complete, or when the bowel movement is finished)
8. Your child is able to get a reasonable amount of toilet paper without assistance.
9. Your child is able to wipe without assistance and put the soiled tissue in the potty, *or* can at least call for help if assistance is needed to properly wipe.
10. Your child is able to flush the toilet without assistance.
11. Your child is able to pull up his or her own underpants without assistance.
12. Your child is able to pull up his or her own pants/skirt without assistance.
13. Your child is able to climb down from the potty seat without assistance.
14. Your child is able to turn on the water to wash hands without assistance.
15. Your child is able to put soap on his or her hands without assistance.
16. Your child is able to turn off the water without assistance.
17. Your child is able to dry his or her hands with a towel without assistance.

This *does not* mean that your child can *never* have an accident while in my care. Although that would be wonderful, I don't expect that to be the case. Whenever a new skill is being perfected, there are bound to be some mistakes and setbacks. When these occur, your child will be expected to help with correcting the situation, including cleaning up their mess, packing up their soiled clothing, and retrieving and changing into their spare clothes. This is necessary in order to reinforce that it is more pleasant to work on learning to go potty properly, rather than simply make a mess and let someone else clean it up.

Some children may do well at toilet training for several weeks, then decide that it's too much trouble and they don't want to be bothered with having to remember to go on their own. At this point, it is critical that the child be taught that toileting is not "optional" and that they will have to deal with the consequences of their actions. When they realize that taking off their messy clothing, putting it into a bag, cleaning themselves off, putting the bag of soiled clothing in their cubby, getting out their spare clothing, dressing themselves, and cleaning up the puddles from the accident is more trouble than simply

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going potty correctly in the first place, they will be more motivated to learn how to do it properly on their own.

If your child experiences a lot of accidents (more than one or two per week) and/or your child begins to experience other difficulties with toileting, such as refusing to go, willfully making messes, refusing to be responsible for cleaning up their accidents, etc., then we will need to coordinate our efforts to help your child learn.

Please keep in mind that the burden of training your child to successfully go potty will need to reside with you. I simply do not have the resources to devote to training your child for you since I care for more than one child at a time. I will do my best to assist you in your training efforts, and will consult with you to be sure we coordinate our efforts in order to present consistent expectations at home and at daycare. But ultimately the responsibility to potty-train your child must rest with you.

Feel free to discuss your concerns with me regarding your plans to potty train your child. I will attempt to help you to the best of my ability.