



EVERYDAY ROUTINES

Building Bathroom Routines and Toilet Training Skills

Help your child get comfortable with the bathroom. Teach the steps one at a time. Start with what your child's body and skills can do right now.

There is more than one skill to learn

Learning to use the toilet is not just one skill. It includes noticing the need to go, walking to the bathroom, managing clothes, sitting safely, and cleaning up after. Your child may learn some parts fast and need more help with others. That is normal.

Check for pain first

Hard or painful poops can be a sign of constipation. So can holding poop in, or new poop stains in underwear. Talk to your child's doctor about this first — more toilet practice will not fix pain that hasn't been treated.

Prepare a comfortable start

1 Notice your child's current pattern.

Write down when your child pees or poops. Write down any signs they need to go, and any discomfort you notice. Look for signs of interest, dry periods, and willingness to try. Ask the doctor how to adjust this for any health or movement needs.

2 Make sitting feel steady.

Use a stable potty chair, or a toilet seat insert with solid foot support. Help your child get on and off if they need it. Keep the path clear and supplies nearby.

3 Choose an easy way for your child to tell you.

Pick one familiar word, sign, picture, or device button for “toilet” or “help.” Your child does not need full sentences to take part in this.



Practice without a power struggle

Pick a time when you can help without rushing. A short, comfortable try works better than a long sit that ends in fear.

1 Offer a toilet visit at a useful time.

Try it when your child shows signs they need to go, or at a time that fits their pattern, like right after waking up. Don't make your child wait to finish a task first, and don't use a timer to force a wait.

2 Work on one part at a time.

Your child might start by just walking into the bathroom. Or by sitting briefly with clothes still on, to get used to the seat. When you do try the toilet, help move clothing out of the way. Let your child get up whenever they want — never hold or strap them to the seat.

3 Help finish the routine.

Help with wiping, clothes, and handwashing as needed. Explain what you're doing before you help with private care. Keep your child covered when you can. Only share details about this with people who truly need to know.

4 Notice effort, and keep accidents simple.

Point out something that worked: "You told me you needed the toilet." If clothes get wet or soiled, just help your child get clean and dry. Don't scold, shame, or make them sit longer as a punishment.

An example of a smaller first step

A child grips the sides of the toilet seat and asks to get down. The parent helps them off right away. Later, with solid foot support, the child tries sitting for a moment — they still need help with clothing. The family works on comfort first, before asking for anything more.

For help with dressing and handwashing, see **Dressing, Hygiene, and Personal Care**.



Adjust when learning gets stuck

If your child avoids the bathroom

Notice which part feels hard for your child.

What this can look like

Loud flush: Let your child leave the room before you flush, or cover their ears first. Try flushing only after they've already left.

Unsteady seat: Add a toilet seat insert and a stool for their feet. A wobbly seat can feel scary long before a child can explain why.

Clothing: Practice pulling pants up and down outside of bathroom time, so it's one less new thing to manage during a real try.

Pain: Stop and check with the doctor first. No amount of practice fixes pain that hasn't been treated.

If fear grows, pause the training. Ask for help instead of repeating longer sits — a longer sit does not fix fear, it usually adds to it.



If accidents continue

An accident is information. It is not a reason to blame your child. Write down when it happened, and note whether there was pain or a change in routine. Poop leaks in underwear can happen with constipation, so don't assume they were on purpose.

Daytime toilet use and staying dry at night are two different skills. Use the protection your child needs at night. Don't cut back on needed drinks, and don't pressure your child to stay dry while sleeping.

When to seek medical help

Contact your child's doctor about painful peeing or pooping, holding poop in, ongoing leaks, or new accidents after doing well for a while. With constipation, get medical help right away for blood in the poop, a swollen belly, constant belly pain, or vomiting.

Plan support that fits your child

Keep your child's usual drinks and care available. Don't cut back needed drinks, and don't force extra drinks just for toilet practice. Ask the doctor before using any medicine to help your child poop.

A behavior analyst is a professional who helps families understand behavior and teach new skills — they can help plan the learning steps. An occupational therapist is a professional who helps with seating, clothing, and physical access — they can help with equipment. Share the same words and supports with every caregiver in your child's life.

A good question to ask any provider: **“Which part should we work on first, and how can we make it comfortable?”** Bring your notes, and explain what help your child already uses.

This is a starting guide for bathroom routines. It is not a full toilet-training plan or a medical treatment plan.