

Inclusive Developmental and Therapy Center

Gentle Toilet Training: A Step-by-Step Home Program

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Toilet training can feel like a big milestone, and it is easy to worry when other children seem to be there already. The good news is that most children get there in their own time, and a calm, patient approach nearly always works better than rushing. This program walks you through gentle steps you can use at home, starting only when your child is truly ready.

Every child is different, and there is no single “right” age. This guide is here to support you, not to add pressure — and it is not a substitute for advice from your doctor or health visitor. If you have any worries about your child’s health or development, please speak to a professional as well.

♥ Who this program is for

- ✓ Parents of toddlers who are showing early signs of being ready
- ✓ Families who want a calm, no-shouting approach
- ✓ Children moving out of nappies for the first time
- ✓ Parents who have tried before and want to start again gently
- ✓ Anyone who feels stressed about toilet training and wants a clear plan

⚡ Important — when to get professional help

This is a supportive home program, not a diagnosis or a substitute for an assessment. Please speak to a professional promptly if:

Pain, crying or blood when your child wees or poos

Ongoing constipation or very hard, infrequent stools

A complete return to accidents after being reliably trained

Your child is well past the usual age with no signs of readiness at all

Any sudden change alongside tummy pain, fever or being generally unwell

☆ Your step-by-step roadmap

Move at your child's pace, not the calendar's — the “weeks” are a gentle order, not a race. Repeat any stage as long as it helps.

Week 1 — Watch for readiness and get set up

Notice the signs and gather what you need before you begin.

Look for readiness signs — staying dry for longer, telling you when they have done a wee or poo, or showing interest in the toilet.

Buy a potty or a child toilet seat and step, and let your child pick a colour if you can.

Start naming what is happening in a calm, cheerful way (“You did a wee!”) so the words become familiar.

⚡ **Try** Let your child watch a parent or older sibling use the toilet — children
this: learn a lot by copying.

Week 2 – Get friendly with the potty

Make the potty a normal, relaxed part of the day.

Let your child sit on the potty with clothes on at first, so it feels safe and ordinary.

Read a short book or sing a song while they sit, keeping it light and unhurried.

Offer a sit on the potty after waking and after meals, but never force them to stay.

⚡ **Try this:** Keep the potty in easy reach in the room where your child plays most.

Week 3 – Nappy-off time and catching wees

Give more chances to succeed with less between them and the potty.

Choose a calm day at home and let your child play with a bare bottom or in easy-to-pull-down clothes.

Offer the potty every 45 to 60 minutes, and any time you spot the “I need to go” signs.

Celebrate any success warmly and stay completely relaxed about accidents.

⚡ **Try this:** Keep drinks flowing — more fluids means more chances to practise.

Week 4 – Out and about and building the habit

Carry the new skill into everyday life.

Keep a steady routine of potty visits at key times — waking, before leaving the house, and before bed.

Bring a spare set of clothes when you go out and stay calm if there is an accident.

Teach simple hand-washing every time, making it part of the fun.

⚡ **Try this:** A small, portable potty or a familiar seat can make outings much easier.

Week 5 – Steady, confident and (later) dry nights

Let the daytime habit settle before worrying about nights.

Keep praising effort, not just success, so your child stays keen.

Wait until daytime is well established before trying without a night nappy.

Check nappies in the morning — several dry nights in a row is a sign your child may be ready for dry nights.

⚡ **Try this:** Night dryness often comes months after daytime — that is completely normal, so there is no rush.

🔑 Tricks that make it work

- ✓ Never punish or shame accidents — they are part of learning.
- ✓ Keep your voice calm and cheerful, even when you feel frustrated.
- ✓ Watch for the constipation cycle — a child who holds on may need more
- ✓ Dress your child in clothes that are quick and easy to pull down.
- ✓ Pick a settled week to start, not during a house move, new baby or illness.
- ✓ If it is not working, take a break for a few weeks and try again later.

fibre and fluids.

How you'll know it's working

- Your child tells you before or as they need to go
- Longer stretches of staying dry between visits
- Fewer accidents week by week
- Your child asks for the potty or toilet by themselves



Is this based on real methods? This program follows a readiness-based approach — waiting for your child's signs of readiness and staying consistent and positive — in line with widely used guidance from the American Academy of Paediatrics on toilet training.