

# Guide to Toilet Teaching

## Step-by-Step

**1. Introduce the idea:** If your child has not requested it himself, you might say at breakfast one morning, “we think you are ready to stop wearing diapers and start using the potty now.” Make a positive statement: don’t ask a question such as “Do you want to stop wearing diapers?” unless you are willing to take no for an answer.

**2. Give advance notice:** Don’t rush into things. Give your child time to get warm up to the idea. Set a date for later in the week to buy and start wearing underpants. You might say, “on Thursday morning we’ll go shopping for new underpants.” Choose a day when you’ll be at home and when the atmosphere will be relaxed. Don’t try to start your child in pants on a day when he is going to a birthday party or when you are expecting friends for lunch. If you are working parents, you may want to start on a Saturday. If not, a quiet weekday may be best.

**3. Give another reminder:** In a day or two, mention once again that the day is coming up, but don’t harp on it and don’t build it up too much. **A calm-matter-of-fact attitude** will reassure your child.

**4. Call off the procedure if:** (1) your child responds with a vehement “NO!” (2) your child is in a particularly negative mood or out of sorts that week; (3) an unexpected event, such as the loss of an important person or illness disrupts everyday routines. Wait a few weeks until things are calmer and begin again.

**5. When the big day comes:** Take your child with you to buy underpants. Select several kinds that are acceptable to you, and then let him choose the styles and colors he likes from the ones you’ve chosen. Be sure to buy them big enough so he’ll be able to pull them up and down easily. It is suggested you buy three-ply underwear and purchase at least a dozen pairs.

**6. At home remove the diaper:** Help your child put on a pair of pants and store the others in a low drawer or on a shelf within his reach. Let him admire himself in the mirror. Explain that since he isn’t wearing a diaper he’ll have to put his “pee-pee and BM’s in the potty.” Remind him to tell mommy and daddy when he has to use the potty.

**7. Lead him to the potty once:** Ask him to try to urinate. If he does, encourage him mildly and give him a little hug. Do not over praise.

**8. Remind him once again:** “Remember, you’re not wearing diapers now, so you’ll have to use the potty.”

**9. Now wait for accidents:** They are useful and necessary, because only from them will your child learn what is going on. At first, he may be amazed to see urine flowing from his new pants, because he doesn't really understand they won't act like diapers.

**10. Be relaxed about accidents:** DON'T PANIC- it's only a little water and can be easily mopped up. Express calm reassurance that "next time you'll remember to tell mommy you have to pee in the potty." It isn't even necessary to say, "Try to remember" which puts the pressure on try. Your encouragement that he will learn is all that is needed. Some children are upset about spoiling their pants and need to be reassured that they'll be as good as new after being washed.

**11. After and accident:** Lead your child to the potty "to see if any more comes out." This exercise reminds him where the urine should have gone. Help him get a new pair of pants and get them on.

**12. Don't flush away the contents in the potty:** Wait until your child has left the bathroom before flushing, especially for BM's. Some children get upset about seeing their bowel movements flushed away while other children it may not bother.

**13. At nap time and at night:** Because dryness when sleeping usually comes a bit later than waking control, put your child back in diapers at bedtime. Simply explain he will put on underpants when he awakes.

**14. From now on:** For the next few days observe how your child is managing this new skill. If he frequently doesn't make it to the potty and seems bewildered about what is going on, assume you have made a mistake about readiness and postpone toilet teaching for another month or two. If he does well and the accident rate stays within bounds, keep him in pants for all waking activities.