

Parent Tips:

Toilet Learning with Older Infants and Toddlers

As with all learning, consistency is the key to success in toileting. Each child is ready at a different time to begin this aspect of self-care. Once your child demonstrates an interest in toileting, your child's teacher will be in constant communication with the progress your child is making at school. It's important to include your child in these conversations. Signs of readiness may include:

- Dry diapers during changes or stays dry for a long while; wet or dirty diapers mostly after a meal
- Interest in toilet (what it does, how it works) or in others using the toilet (e.g. mom, dad, sibling)
- Interest in wearing underwear and/or enthusiastic about dressing self
- Aware of the need and is able to verbally tell you when needs to use the toilet; able to let you know if they are wet/dirty after they have eliminated in a diaper
- Dislikes having wet/soiled diaper
- Tries to hide when they are having a bowel movement
- Has a bowel movement in the same spot most days
- Wants to stand instead of sit after a bowel movement

Here are some suggestions to maximize your child's independence in toilet learning:

1. Your child needs loose-fitting clothes that can be pulled up and down, taken off, and put on by your child, including shoes. The desire to use the toilet stems from a need to be independent, so giving your child practical clothes reduces frustration in this process. At school, your child will change clothes by him/herself with adult guidance.
2. Avoid clothing that gets in the way of using the toilet, such as overalls, onesies, any clothing with snaps or buttons, and dresses/skirts.
3. Several sets of clothes need to be provided from home and replaced as necessary, including shirts, elastic-waist pants, underwear, socks and shoes. Please label all items!
4. Encourage your child to wear cotton training pants only (Gerber brand works well). LePort Schools does not allow "Pull-Ups" because they may confuse or delay toilet learning. Pull-Ups wick away moisture so effectively that they discourage a child from remembering to urinate in the toilet.
5. During the first weeks of toileting, your child will be asked to use the toilet often, approximately every 30 - 45 minutes. If your child does not want to try the toilet, teachers will simply remind and encourage. When at home, you may encourage your child in the same way. Invite your child to go to the bathroom without making it sound like a command. Rather than ask a yes/no question like, "Do you need to go potty?" try a brief statement, "Let's go try the toilet," or "I see you're

awake; let's go to the bathroom." Please avoid placing your child on the toilet if he/she resists, as this is a delicate time in your child's growth toward independence! Offering limited choices can also be effective, "Do you want to go to the toilet now, or after you've put your socks on?"

6. If your child has a bowel movement in a diaper or small potty, he can help flush it down the toilet.
7. The toilet is not a place for playing, socializing, reading books, etc. The longer you linger, the more your child might lose focus as to why he/she is there.
8. Please avoid offering any reward systems during the toilet learning process.

Open, positive communication is an important part of toilet learning. Please tell your child's teacher the words you use at home for solid elimination (poo, poop, bowel movement) and liquid elimination (pee, wee, urine) so that we can be consistent between home and school.

Elimination is a natural part of life, so we avoid discussing toileting with any derogatory comments, such as "Eww, it stinks," or "You made such a big mess." It is also important to refrain from using terms like "good" and "bad" and to avoid showing anger or disappointment over a "wet event". Try using mildly positive, factual observations like, "You have been dry the whole day" or "You're using the toilet just like Mom and Dad." Be cautious about overdoing excitement or praise; excessive positive reinforcement can be too much pressure.

We prefer the term "wet event" to the term "accident", since the latter has negative connotations. All "wet events" will be used as learning experiences. For example, when a child urinates in his underwear and clothes, a teacher may say matter of factly, "I see your clothes are wet; let's go get some dry clothes so you will feel more comfortable." When possible, we try to involve the child in the clean-up process, especially in undressing and dressing himself.

Keep in mind that your child wants to be like you! Modeling toileting at home will help your child feel more comfortable when he/she is ready for this natural part of life. Remember to always finish with hand washing, as this will instill a healthy habit once he/she is toileting independently. If your child refuses to use the toilet, avoid the power struggle and try another time. Patience and understanding go a long way, and consistency without pressure will help your child achieve success!

If your child is nearing age three, he must have completed toilet learning and be consistently dry while diaper-free before being considered for a move-up into a Primary classroom. Please note that toilet learning is only one factor under consideration, along with general independence, maturity, social interactions, skill development, and space availability.



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Toileting is an important and exciting time in your child's life. We feel confident that as we work together, we can help your child take that next valuable step forward!