



SELA

The International Private Sch

SELA's Guide to Potty Training

Potty training is an exciting time for you and your child! This milestone of independence and freedom for children and parents is wonderful. There are bumps in the road like every stage your child goes through, which means that patience and consistency are key factors to success. We want this transition to be as successful and quick as possible for families, so we will work with you and support the practices you are using. When and how to help your child learn to use the potty depends on how ready your child is, as well as your own beliefs and values about toilet training. There is not one “right” way or one “right” age to learn, however there are some key developments that must take place prior to your child being successful in the potty-training process. Here are some thoughts to keep in mind as you help your child learn to use the toilet.

Signs That Children Are Ready for Potty Training

In order to potty train successfully, a child must be able to control their bladder. This skill is necessary for children to physically be able to use the toilet. Although early training is possible, studies show that many children who begin potty training before 18 months aren't completely trained until after the age of 4. In contrast, children who don't start training until around the age of 2 are likely to be fully potty trained before they turn 3. Girls tend to be ready to potty train a little earlier than boys, but the readiness signs for both boys and girls are the same.

Your child is ready to learn to use the toilet when he or she:

- Stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time, or after naps
- Recognizes that she is urinating or having a bowel movement. For example, your child might go into another room or under the table when she has a bowel movement. This is important—if your child does not realize she is having a bowel movement, she won't be successful at potty training.
- Is developing physical skills that are critical to potty training—the ability to walk, to pull pants up and down, and to get onto/off the potty (with some help).
- Copies a parent's toileting behavior.
- Can follow simple instructions.
- Most importantly, your child wants to use the potty. He may tell you that he wants to wear “big boy” underpants or learn to go potty “like Daddy does.” He may feel uncomfortable in a soiled diaper and ask to be changed or ask to use the toilet himself. If a child is not showing these signs, they cannot be successful.

When Not to Start Potty Training

There are some issues that can sometimes get in the way of successful potty training. For example, when children are going through a significant change or several changes at once (see list below) it might be smart to hold off on adventures in potty training. At these times, children often feel overwhelmed and sometimes lose skills they have already learned or were making progress on, like potty training. Common situations that can cause stress and are generally not good times to start training include:

- An upcoming or recent family move
- Beginning new or changing existing childcare arrangements or classrooms
- Switching from crib to bed
- When you are expecting or have recently had a new baby
- A major illness, a recent death, or some other family crisis

If your child is in the middle of potty training during a stressful time and seems to be having more accidents than usual, know that this is normal. Your child needs all of your patience and support right now. Your child will return to the previous level of potty training once things have gotten back to normal.

Starting Potty Training

It can be helpful to think of potty training as a process in which both you and your child have your own “jobs” to do.

It is the parent’s responsibility to create a supportive learning environment. This means that you:

- Recognize that your child is in control of his or her body
- Let your child decide whether to use the potty or a diaper/pull-up each day
- Teach your child words for body parts, urine, and bowel movements
- Offer your child the tools needed to be successful at toileting (a small potty, potty seat, stool, etc.)
- Expect and handle potty accidents without anger
- Avoid punishment as well as too much praise around toilet use. (This can make children feel bad when they aren’t successful.)

It is your child’s responsibility to:

- Decide whether to use the toilet or a diaper/pull-up
- Learn the body’s signals for when it is times to use the toilet
- Use the toilet at his/her own speed

Finding a toilet training method that works for your family is the key. No matter how you do it, remember this is a learning process that takes time, with many accidents along the way. Being patient is the best way you can support your child as she learns.

Keep in mind that children with special needs may take longer to learn to use the potty. They may also need special equipment, and a lot of help and support from you. If you need assistance with your child’s toilet training, talk with your child’s health care provider.

What to Avoid When Potty Training a Toddler

Older toddlers and young preschoolers are all about trying to gain some control over their world. They are using their growing physical, thinking, and language skills to gain some power over themselves, their bodies, and their surroundings. This natural and healthy desire for control can lead to power struggles, as children quickly figure out that one way to feel in charge is by refusing to do something they know their parents want them to do. And, for better or worse, learning to use the potty is way up there on most parents’ list of what they really, really, really want their children to do—and children quickly pick up on that. Toilet training is particularly ripe for power struggles because it is so tied up with toddlers wanting to have control over their own bodies.

So it’s important to approach toilet training matter-of-factly and without a lot of emotion. Think of it as just another skill you are helping your child learn. If you show anger or disappointment when it’s not going well, or overwhelming joy when it is, it lets your child know this is something you want him to do badly. Refusing to do it becomes a very powerful way for your child to feel in control. The more emotional you are, the more it shows your child how much it matters to you that he uses the potty.

It is also very important not to force your child to use the potty because it can cause intense power struggles. These power struggles sometimes lead to children trying to regain control over their bodies by withholding urine or bowel movements. This can create physical problems, like constipation. So if you are starting to see power struggles developing over potty training, it might help to take the pressure off. Stop talking about potty training or doing anything about it for a little while, until your child shows signs of readiness and interest again.

When Preschoolers Are Still Not Interested in Potty Training

Reach out to your child’s health care provider with your questions or concerns about potty training. Occasionally, children have physical issues that make potty training more difficult, so a check-up is always a good idea. You may also want to sit down with a child development specialist who can help you figure out what the challenges around potty training might be for your individual child and can help you identify toilet learning strategies that might be more successful.

Potty Training at SELA: What to Expect

Potty training is an exciting time, and its success represents a huge milestone in your child's development. We do our best to support families and children during their training process. We do want to caution parents, however, that a child's use of the potty at home does not necessarily equate to their use at school, especially in the beginning stages of training. Before we join with parents who have started this process at home, we need to see clear signs at school, as mentioned above, that the child is ready while at school.

There are many factors that influence a child's active participation in the potty-training process at school. Not only is it a different physical bathroom space, that they may be less familiar with, but the general routine is likely different at home vs. at school. A major factor is the level of stimulation in the environment. Whereas the home usually provides a quieter environment with lots of one-on-one parental interaction, our school is active and engaging in totally different ways. Children often cannot focus on the urge that tells them it is time to use the potty, or they do not want to stop what they are doing to use the potty.

We will never force a child to sit on the potty against their will. We will ask them to "try" at regular and frequent intervals once training starts, but if they refuse, then we respect their answer. In the end the child has to decide when he/she is ready and willing to do what's necessary to be successful. The good news is that when a child is ready, potty training will happen quickly. The best approach is to follow your child's lead and introduce potty training when they have an interest and the physical ability to be successful. Please let your director and/or child's teacher(s) know when you have begun potty training at home. When your child is showing signs of also being ready at school, we will join in the process with you and set up a plan to support the process. SELA teachers will create a sticker potty chart for each child and may get special stickers that are unique and exciting for your child based on their interests, but are not able to offer food rewards as incentives for potty training.

Children should wear easy on and off pants during training. Sweat pant like bottoms are nice and easy until they are physically capable of doing snaps and buttons. Clothing such as overalls, costumes, one-piece jammies, or onesie shirts with snaps are a hinderance to a child's ability to quickly and easily use the potty. Either diapers, pull-ups, or going straight to underwear are okay for potty training at SELA, but we do recommend nap diapers or pull-ups until the child has consistently slept through nap without an accident for at least 2 weeks. Please ensure that we have lots of spare clothes in school including shoes and socks for any accidents that may happen.

Potty Training Resources:

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/three-day-potty-training-tips-4071189>

<https://www.babycenter.com/toddler/potty-training/potty-training-readiness-checklist>

<https://www.icanteachmychild.com/potty-train-without-losing-mind>

<https://www.pampers.com/en-us/toddler/potty-training/article/potty-training-at-day-care>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/infant-and-toddler-health/in-depth/potty-training/art-20045230>

Potty Training Regression Resources:

<https://www.mother.ly/child/potty-training-regression>

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/potty-training-regression-2634551>

<https://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/potty-training/problems/how-to-deal-with-potty-training-regression/>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/toilet-training/Pages/Regression.aspx>

<https://www.care.com/c/stories/4915/potty-training-regression-how-to-get-your-ch/>

<https://alphamom.com/parenting/toddler-parenting/potty-training-regression-and-new-sibling/>

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Community Paediatrics Committee, Canadian Paediatric Society, (2000). *Toilet learning: Anticipatory guidance with a child-oriented approach*. *Pediatrics & Child Health*, 5(6), 333-335.