

KEY POINTS TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE DRESSING SKILLS

- Success is important. Begin with easy steps, avoiding difficult fastenings, tight clothes, lots of layers.
- Dressing should not be seen as a chore. Try to keep it fun with rewards for carrying out skills e.g. dressing up, dressing toys.
- Allow plenty of time – do not rush.
- A calm quiet environment is best when trying to learn new skills so try to ensure that any noise or distractions such as other children in the room, television or computers are kept to a minimum.
- Follow same sequence/routine when dressing and place clothes in the order you wish your child to put them on e.g vest, pants, socks.
- Tackle one step at a time and give help where needed with other steps of the task e.g. putting on a sock may need to be broken down into putting sock over toe, then heel and then pulling up.
- Try not to watch all the time – children often do more when left alone.
- Work on undressing before dressing.

It is really important that your child is sitting in a supported position so they can use two hands when dressing.

- Sit on bed or chair with feet supported.
- Sit on floor if easier to reach feet than to bend down.
- Sit on the **bottom** step of the stairs or small stool to put on socks/shoes.

CLOTHES

- Always dress the lower half of the child's body first.
- Use loose fitting, lightweight clothing.
- Avoid lots of layers and difficult fastenings e.g. jeans, sweatshirts.

- Use wide neck holes and wide sleeves to make it easier to locate these.
- Use elastic waistbands on trousers if buttons and buckles are difficult.
- Velcro/zips can be used instead of buttons or buckles e.g. on coat/shirt use Velcro and sew the button on top of the buttonhole.
- Put a loop of ribbon or key ring on end of zip to give something extra to grip.
- Lay clothes out in the correct sequence.
- Place socks partly over the child's foot, then encourage them to pull them up.
- Sport/tubular socks are easier than those with a heel.
- Socks with coloured heels and toes also make it easier to work out the correct way round the sock goes.
- Only undo a few buttons when taking off a shirt or blouse and remove/put shirt on over the child's head, encourage them to fasten last few buttons.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO LEARN TO DRESS

Backward chaining- the adult begins the task with the child doing only the last step. Gradually the adult does less as the child is able to do more of the task themselves. This way the child always gets the reward of finishing the task.

- **Example of backward chaining-** T-shirt – let the child remove the t-shirt from their head, next time let the child remove the t-shirt from their neck, then let them remove it with one arm in and one arm out moving onto one arm in and one arm half out, then let the child remove the t-shirt with both arms in and t-shirt pulled up to their shoulders finally let the child remove the t-shirt independently.

Forward chaining- This is when the child starts the task, for example putting the t-shirt over their head with the adult helping with the later stages that the child needs help with such as putting their arms through the sleeves, the child needs to be motivated to begin the task themselves.

Always demonstrate the correct technique first, telling the child what you are doing at each stage e.g. I am unbuttoning the shirt, taking your arm out of the sleeve. Try to maintain the same order each time you do this activity to ensure consistency.

Child not gripping clothes to put on

- Use adult hand over the child's hand to grip underneath adult's fingers.
- Roll up clothing to create "more" to grip e.g. roll up jumper before putting on.
- Put elastic around waist or sleeves to ease gripping.

Child loses arm and head holes

- Lay clothes flat in front of the child with arms showing.
- Place arms into garment first so they cannot be lost. Then put head in.

Child finds buttons difficult

- Unbuttoning is easier than buttoning.
- Practice with the garment in front of her on the table.
- Larger buttons, working down to smaller ones.
- Practice out of dressing times e.g. dressing Teddy.
- Put small toys in cloth bag with buttons or use zip lock bags so your child is practicing these skills regularly.

Games to develop DRESSING skills

- Practice putting arms in/out sleeves/trousers by using hoops placed over arms/legs and pulling them off.
- Pass a beanbag or ball from hand to hand behind back when sitting on floor.
- Dressing up dolls, playing house – changing the baby etc. Play 'dressing up'
- Simon Says- ask the child to identify body parts to practice knowing which body part is which, or give them different clothes to put on.
- Playing in front of a mirror to gain body and spatial awareness.
- Copy a friend being dressed, or dress in front of a mirror.
- Play games involving posting coins, threading, pegs to help with pincer grip of fingers required for buttons and zips.

- playdough – squeeze, roll and pinch to help with strength in hands.