

DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE WITH SELF CARE SKILLS

DRESSING SKILLS STRATEGIES

- 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 eg 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.
- Work on undressing before dressing.
- It is important that your child is sitting in a supported position so they can use two hands e.g on a chair or on the floor leaning against the wall.

CLOTHES

- Use loose fitting, lightweight clothing.
- Velcro / zips / elasticated waists 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.
- Socks with coloured heels and toes 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 fastenings difficult

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

ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP BUTTON SKILLS:

Fine motor pre-button skills:

- Posting games like money into a piggy bank
- Threading games with cotton reels, beads and big buttons. Work with finer and finer sizes as child manages
- If threading skills are good post pennies through a slit in a square of paper. Then use scraps of material
- Put two big buttons on either end of a piece of elastic and thread bits of paper or material as above onto the elastic. Make the slit smaller and smaller as the child manages

Below are some developmental ideas for buttoning:

1. Sit with your child and show them how the button goes through the hole. If you have a cardigan with larger buttons, these are more appropriate to begin with. Let your child practice and get to know the process of how to unbutton and redo buttons.
2. Using shirts that are off the body, when they are confident of doing the buttoning on their own, let them practice this skill – they can do up the buttons on the shirts when you are doing the ironing etc. You can buy interesting buttons from haberdashery shops and sew these on a shirt to practice on. (Keep them round though, odd shaped buttons may pose a problem.)
3. Then encourage your child to practice doing up buttons on shirts that someone else is wearing. The resistance of the body is then provided, but they can still see what they are doing.
4. Finally progress to buttons on a shirt they are wearing. Let him practice undoing buttons first and then they can start to do up own buttons. Bear in mind that it is easier to do the buttons at the bottom of the shirt than up round his neck, so start with these. It is also easier to line up the material so that they use the right buttonhole for the right button.

Other hints:

- Collar and cuff buttons are difficult. Jean and waist buttons on trousers are also more difficult because the material is stiff. Leave these buttons until last.
- Mornings are not a good time to practice because of the time factor. Always practise when there is plenty of time and they will not be rushed. This way your child can experiment as needed.

- Using buttons that are a different colour to the material will help. You can also sew around the buttonhole in a different colour thread to help make this more visible.
- You can sew the buttons on with “elastic thread” available from haberdashery shops. Using this instead of ordinary thread will provide much more give from the button.

Compensatory techniques:

- For school clothes or when time will be limited choose ‘Velcro’ fastenings
- Place ‘Velcro’ dots behind buttons so it looks like buttons are still there and the child still has to match up the material

SHOELACE TYING

Shoelace tying is a task that has a lot of steps to master. Try breaking these down into manageable steps.

Try using two different coloured laces to make the task more visual for your child.

There are many different techniques for shoelace tying including the ‘bow knot’ and ‘bunny ears’ method.

For further ideas and methods see ‘Ian’s shoelace Site’ website at:

<https://www.fiegggen.com/shoelace/index.htm>

BECOMING INDEPENDENT WITH BOTTOM WIPING

How to improve balance for bottom-wiping

Both feet should be placed firmly on the floor, providing the child with a stable base. If this is not possible, provide a step for the child to place his feet on.

Having a hand rail to hold provides stability. Kids toilet seats with handles are often beneficial.

The child should be able to reach behind their body and under their legs in order to bottom-wipe.

Activities to help promote body awareness for bottom-wiping

Pass a ball or balloon around the body or through the legs passing from one hand to the other.

Stick stickers on different places on the child's body – front and back and get the child to find the stickers.

Advice for parents

Buttons and zips are best kept to a minimum when teaching toileting skills.

Have regular toilet times to get the child into a routine such as at every break and lunchtime.

Make sure there is toilet paper near to the child so he/she can reach out while sitting on the toilet.

Provide flushable wet toilet wipes at for easier cleaning.

Practice using toilet paper at home; how many sheets of paper to use and practices folding and the wiping action.

To practice wiping skills laminate a card with targets on it – place chocolate spread or smooth peanut butter in the middle and encourage the child to wipe it off without spreading out to the outside areas away from the red centre.

For more comprehensive information regarding toileting click on the link below.

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/self-care/going-to-the-toilet/>