

Potty training: what works

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Waiting until your child is ready

While there's no magic age at which a child is ready to start using the potty, most toddlers will develop the necessary physical and cognitive skills between 18 and 24 months (though some aren't ready to start until they're as old as four). Use our [checklist](#) to keep track of your toddler's progress toward readiness.

Taking it slow

Mastering the various [steps of potty training](#) can take a long time. Yes, some children will finish in just a few days, but others need weeks or even months, especially to complete [nighttime training](#).

Don't push your child to get through training faster than she's ready for. Let her take her time and get used to this new, complicated process step by step; she'll move from one stage to the next in her own time. Of course, it's perfectly all right to try to stimulate her interest with gentle reminders, stories, and encouragement. If she balks, don't push her too hard.

Making a plan

Before you even buy your child a [potty](#), it's a good idea to think through a plan for how you'd like to handle training. Decide [when](#) and how you want to start, what (if any) incentives you want to use, how to [handle accidents](#), when to back off, and so on.

Discuss your plan with your health visitor and with other parents. Once you've come up with a final plan, be sure you and everyone else who takes care of your child sticks to it (barring unexpected setbacks and other potty training challenges, of course).

Praising your child

Throughout training, your child will be looking to you for positive reinforcement of his new skills. Don't disappoint him. Whenever he moves on to a new step or tries to use his potty (even when he doesn't quite succeed), tell him he's doing well and that you're proud of him. But don't go overboard; too much praise can make him nervous and afraid to fail, which can lead to more accidents and setbacks.

Accepting that there will be accidents

Virtually every child will have several accidents before being completely trained during the day and at night. Try not to get angry or punish your child; after all, it's only recently that his muscles have developed sufficiently to allow him to hold his bladder and rectum closed at all. Mastering the process will take time. When he has an accident, calmly clean it up and suggest that next time he try using his potty instead.