

Healthy Living

Toileting



Toileting in the early years involves preparing children for using the toilet, which typically starts between 18 months and 3 years of age. This process can be challenging and involves teaching children about the toilet, practicing with a potty, and gradually transitioning to using the toilet. Early years educators play a vital role in supporting both children and parents during this transition.

The information around toileting can be overwhelming so we have used the areas below to help you navigate this.

TASK 1 - General

As infants get older, they may show signs that they are ready to start using a potty or going on the toilet. Each child reaches potty training readiness at different ages, and it is important to ensure that each child is truly ready before moving on to this next stage, and that you have discussed it with the parents/carers.

As with nappy changing this should also be a relaxed, happy and a social routine for the children. Consider the questions below and seek guidance if you require:

- How do you recognise the individual needs and readiness for each child to start potty training?
- How effectively do you communicate with parents/carers about their child's progress?

- How do you ensure you are maintaining hygiene and safety standards consistently throughout the nursery?
- What strategies and further practice can you adopt to help support and develop a child's confidence around toilet training?
- How might you support a child to overcome anxieties about using the potty or toilet?
- How do you encourage a child's independence during toileting and changing routines?
- Do you consider a child's cultural needs during toilet training to ensure you are providing an inclusive and respectful environment? And do you have open communication with parents about this?
- How do you manage parents who have high expectations of when their child should start toilet training even though you don't feel that this is something they are ready for just yet?

Use the resources below to support you in answering these questions

- [Help for early years providers : Toilet training](#)
- [Advice about children's bladders and bowels – from birth, to potty training, to school](#)
- [How to potty train - NHS](#)
- [Toilet Training | Under 2's | Teach Early Years](#)
- See additional Q card in the healthy living section - Nappy changing

TASK 2 - Pull ups... yes, or no?

There are many views on whether to promote the use pull ups when a child is learning to use the toilet.

Within your team discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using pull ups as part of a child's toilet training experience. Below is a list of viewpoints you may wish to consider.

Discuss each one, and debate whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? Or is it the other way round? Can you think of any more factors that are not mentioned below?

- Supports a smoother transition between the use of nappies and pants.
- Prolongs Dependency
- Reduces Mess
- Practical for sleep times and outings
- Gives mixed signals to the child
- Impacts the environment
- Conveniency
- Less urgency

When using pull ups, it is important to have a flexible approach, ensuring that you collaborate with parents throughout.

However, when a child is showing signs that they are ready to use the toilet, your focus should be how to support the children to develop their awareness and independence at a pace that is right for them.

TASK 3 - Children

How do you support children through the process of toileting? What activities, resources and materials do you use to influence your curriculum planning?

Create a mind map of activities you provide; how could you improve this offer? Here are some resources to start you off.

- [Younger children - ERIC](#)
- [Child Checklist](#)
- [Toilet Story for Schools](#)

TASK 4 - Partnerships with parents

Working in partnership and giving advice and guidance to parents is key to successful toilet training.

How do you currently work with parents on the topic? What does your practice currently look like? Could you make improvements to involve them more?

Here are some useful resources to support your thinking.

- [PT – Toilet training - IHV](#)
- <https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2025/03/Parent-Handout-for-Toilet-Training.pdf>
- Parent course - [Talking about school - parent / carer event - ERIC](#)
- [Information in other languages - ERIC](#)

TASK 5 - Supporting children with additional needs

For some children toileting can be particularly challenging due to developmental needs and SEND. The links below have a wealth of resources to support settings and parents.

- [Resources for early years settings - ERIC](#)
- [Intimate care policy for nurseries, school and colleges - ERIC](#)
- [Potty training children with additional needs - ERIC](#)
- [Toilet training with an autistic child | Autism Space | Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust](#)
- [Toileting](#)- Autistic society
- Additional support is available by contacting the Early Years support Team- [School's Extranet](#)

TASK 6 -Transitions to school

Can a school deny a child in nappies admission?

“No, they can't. The Equality Act 2010 states that schools must not discriminate against or disadvantage disabled children or those with special educational needs.

A delay in achieving continence - or not being toilet trained - is considered a disability. It is therefore not acceptable for a school to refuse or delay admission to children who are not yet continent.

Schools must work to support those children in the school environment so they can play an active role in school life, remain healthy and achieve their academic potential.

Schools should also avoid putting pressure on parents/carers of children who are having accidents to send them in wearing a nappy 'just in case' an accident should occur”.

<https://eric.org.uk/information/school-toilet-policy/FAQ>

Here are some more reflective questions for settings and schools to consider described by ERIC:

- Has Health and Safety been considered around a child wetting and soiling themselves such as hygiene, PPE, disposal, washing?
- The environment - are there adequate facilities?
- Is safeguarding paramount and is privacy addressed
- Have policies and procedures been developed for staff to follow in the result of a toileting accident/ personal care?
- Are budgets considered for resources and materials required in this area?
- Do staff job descriptions incorporate personal care and are roles and responsibilities transparent?

Resources to support your reflection:

[Video: Helping children with toileting difficulties to use the toilets at school - ERIC](#) – watch

[Toilets-and-school-readiness.pdf](#)

[School toilet charter - ERIC](#)

[Sample School Toilet Policy](#)

[All aboard the Toilet Train: Get ready for school - ERIC](#)