

## Follow-up Letter for Pre-school Potty Training

Parents,

It seems like just yesterday that you brought your little one home and were buying those tiny newborn diapers. Suddenly your baby is now a toddler and you may be wondering if it is time to begin potty training. How do you know if your child is ready? How do you know if you are ready? This month we are going to help you work your way through potty training!

The first thing you need to decide is if your child is ready or not. It seems these days that parents are trying earlier and earlier to leave diapers behind. However, there is no magic age that children should be potty trained by. This milestone hinges on physical and emotional readiness, not a specific age. Some children are able and show signs of being ready at 18-24 months and some are three or four before it finally clicks with them.

First, let's make sure if they are ready or not. Does your child seem interested in the potty/toilet or in wearing underwear? Does a wet or dirty diaper upset them? Do they tell you they have to go through their words, actions or facial expressions? Are they staying dry for two or more hours during the day? If you answered yes to most of these, there is a good chance that your child is ready to begin potty training. If the answer is no, you probably need to wait a little while. It's important to remember that your child cannot be rushed in this task. Every child is different and trying to get them to accomplish something that they aren't ready for will only make this a negative experience for them and you.

If you have established that your child is ready to begin potty training, where do you begin? First of all, you may need to make sure you have the proper equipment for your child. Buy a potty chair or seat that attaches to your toilet, or even better, let your child help to pick one out. This ownership can help them become excited about using it. If you don't want to use a separate potty, make sure you have a stool so your child can easily reach the toilet.

Next, create a routine for your child. Pick a time (after breakfast, before bath or snack) and let them sit on the potty every day. This helps them understand that this will be a normal part of their routine now. If your child cries or seems scared, you may want to wait a little longer to begin trying but keep the potty visible and talk positively about it. We don't want this to be scary for them!

Sometimes, demonstration can be the best teaching tool. If you are comfortable with it, allow your child to see when you or an older sibling goes to the bathroom. This is a good time to talk them through the process to help them understand what you are talking about. This process is a time to be very open and honest with your child so that there are no misunderstandings or confusion for them.

Choose a time that you are going to "begin" potty training. At first, this needs to be your main focus, your main task at that particular time. Encourage your child to sit on the potty as much as they are willing to. Let them know that it is ok to ask for help with clothes. Don't put your child in clothes that are hard to get on and off. Avoid zippers and buttons; they will just be in the way! If you are able, let your child play around the house without a diaper on. It may mean more clean-up for you, but it allows them to get to the potty quickly and get used to the idea of no more diaper. Some parents like the idea of training pants

or pull-ups while some would rather go right to underwear. Use whatever works for you and your child and makes this experience easy and stress-free as possible! Watch your child closely. They will provide you with cues and signs that they are about to go. You must be involved in this process as much as you can. They won't do it by themselves! You must be devoted and make sure not to do it half-way. If you aren't committed to this, they won't be either.

If your child successfully uses the potty, praise them! This is a huge accomplishment for them! Let them know how proud you are. You may want to incorporate a reward system for them to provide further incentive to keep up the good work. You can find free charts online or make one of your own. Use stickers or small treats to reward them for a good job. Use something that is consistent with your parenting style. At the same time, handle accidents gracefully. This is a learning experience for them and you must be patient. Temporary setbacks are normal. Most kids aren't going to excel at this right away.

Now that we know what to do, what should we avoid? Don't be in a hurry to start this process before your child is ready, it will just make it harder and longer. Be very aware of what else is going on in your life. If you are about to welcome a new baby or move into a new home, you should wait until things calm down and become a little more consistent. Be careful not to add unneeded pressure on your child and be sure not to use punishment if they fail. Don't scold or shame your child. This could only fuel their resistance or make them afraid to try.

Potty training is one of those milestones that parents dread or postpone. Remember that this is just another occasion that your child will complete as they grow up. It may seem like it is taking forever and that you aren't making any progress, but don't give up! Your child won't graduate from high school still in diapers! As hard as it can be, stay patient with your child and make this a positive experience for you all.

Thanks,

Powerhouse Kids at Fellowship Bible Church