

Toilet Learning at Jenny Hart

Toilet learning is an issue for every parent with a two-year-old. The question most parents ask is: "How do I know when my child is ready?" and "How do I begin?" To answer these questions we first must understand the behavior of a two-year old. The two-year-old has discovered that they are now a separate entity from their parents. With this self-realization, they have begun to be able to do things on their own. A two-year-old will exert their newfound independence at every possible opportunity. When it comes to toilet training it's not different. That is why we as teachers and parents must approach toilet training with caution and care. The child will struggle with wanting to learn to use the toilet. We must respect the child during this struggle, but at the same time help the child through it. At Jenny Hart we believe that every child develops at his/her own pace. What might work for one child may not work for another. So we have tried to develop a toilet training philosophy keeping this principle in mind.

Before toilet teaching can occur a child will need to exhibit most of the following behaviors:

- Able to sit down and play quietly for about five minutes
- Can dress and undress self with little or no help
- Able to understand and follow simple directions
- Takes pride in accomplishments
- Has bowel movements at regular times every day
- Able to remain dry for two hours at a time
- Able to urinate a good amount at one time
- The child should also be free from new or stressful situations such as weaning from the breast or bottle, the birth of a new sibling, changes in childcare, moving or a change in family dynamics.

Before toilet training occurs at school, it should be successfully tried at home. You want to make this experience less stressful as possible for your child. The following are Jenny Hart's recommendations on the toilet training teaching process.

1. Casually introduce your child to the "potty".
 - During diaper changes help your child take off their own pants and diaper and sit on the toilet. Have them sit for a short period of time

and encourage them to go potty in the toilet. You can give them a potty book to read to keep the activity desirable. After a short amount of time, praise them for sitting on the potty. Help and encourage them to wipe themselves and flush the toilet (even if they did not go) before putting a clean diaper back on.

- Keep a list of times when your child regularly urinates or has a bowel movement and begin encouraging them to sit on the potty before they soil their diaper.
- Empty bowel movements straight from the diaper in the toilet so they know that is where it belongs.
- Change diapers right away when soiled so your child does not become comfortable with the feeling of being soiled.

****Help and encourage your child to dress and undress self.**

BOYS: Decide how you want them to learn to urinate. The easiest way at school is to stand up while holding "themselves" with one hand and leaning against back of toilet with other hand to prop themselves up. If it is difficult for your child to aim, having them sit on the toilet while holding "themselves" down may be easier. As a last resort, sitting on the toilet facing the tank (straddling) can be effective.

***It is important to teach your boy how to hold "themselves".**

Please share with the teachers what you prefer to call genitals and elimination functions and use the same words with your child at home. ("pee-pee", "pee", "poo-poo", penis, bottom, etc.)

2. Underwear vs. Pull-Ups

- Once your child has mastered sitting on the toilet, it is time to purchase underpants! This is an exciting shopping trip that you need to involve your child in. **BIG** boy/girl underwear is a milestone and helps your child stay excited about using the toilet. When underpants are wet or soiled they will become uncomfortable and your child will learn that is not desirable.
- We don't use pull-ups at school. The pull-up has the same absorbency as a diaper and does not allow children to feel uncomfortable when wet or soiled. They do not teach the child to use the toilet and feel the same to the child as wearing a diaper. Pull-ups can be used in the early stages for introducing the potty at home, and also for sleeping times or traveling, but they are ineffective as a potty training tool.

3. Potty Training 101

- Set aside a weekend when you will be at home. Keep your child in underwear the entire weekend (except for sleeping times). You want your child to be in an environment that they know and are comfortable with.
- Frequently visit the toilet throughout the day, and praise your child when they use the toilet. You may also use stickers and/or stamps as a reward. We discourage the use of food or treats as rewards*.
***Experts strongly advise against the use of treats (food, M&M's, etc) as rewards for several reasons. The main reason is because it is unhealthy for a child to turn to food for reward. You may be unintentionally teaching your child to eat as part of an emotional response. Rewarding a potty training success with food is also illogical since eating food and using the toilet have no place being done together.**
- When accidents occur, DO NOT shame or discipline your child, but have them help in cleaning up. Having the child help clean themselves and their accident is an important part of the logical consequence process. It takes more time and energy to clean up the accident than it does to interrupt their play to use the potty. Be prepared to do lots of laundry!

4. Time for School!

- When you and your child have had a successful weekend with few or no accidents and your child shows a willingness to use the toilet, the toilet learning can be moved from the home to the classroom.
- Please inform your child's teachers of what your potty routine is at home (words used, if a boy sits or stands, etc).
- Always bring 4 to 6 pairs of underwear and extra pants, socks and shoes. We recommend that you dress and bring clothing that is easy for your child to get on and off. Dress your child in things such as sweatpants, pants or shorts with elastic waistbands, or dresses. **We highly discourage belts, onesies, tights or any clothing with too many snaps or buttons.**
- You may also want to apply extra Desitin or Vaseline as being exposed to wet and/or soiled underwear and clothing can cause chapped skin and rashes to occur.
- Be patient and prepared to do lots of laundry. It is a process, but if we all work together in a proactive, consistent way, your child will be successful in no time!