



#### CALL IT TOILET LEARNING

The term "toilet training" is a misleading phrase since parents never actually "train" their child. Instead, children learn to control their bladder and bowel when they are ready, just like they "learn" to sit up, walk, and talk.

Most parents put themselves under pressure to achieve this developmental landmark for a variety of reasons. Some think that the sooner their child achieves bladder and bowel control the better parents they are or the smarter their children are. Others feel pushed into starting the process since they want their child to enter a nursery school or child-care program that requires the children be trained.

Still others are told by their parents that they were trained at 12 months (trust me, it was the adults who were trained). And some view toilet training as a skill to be mastered by an age which is set by their social group.

Whatever the reason, the first and most important rule is not to rush your child into toilet training. The second rule is that your child must be ready. So instead of calling the process "toilet training," lets refer to it as "toilet learning."

#### YOU'LL NEED A WILLING PUPIL

Most toddlers are not ready to control their bladder and bowel until the age of two. This is when most children have both the <u>interest and the ability</u>. If left alone, most children will tell their parents when they are ready for toilet learning. The child will complain when their pants are wet or messy or will watch with interest when other members of the family use the toilet. Since children like to learn new skills, they will sometimes try just by imitating to use the toilet on their own. But you must have a willing "pupil."

TIP: If there are outside stresses in your child's life-- a recent move, a new sibling, a major illness in the family--it is sometimes best to wait even though the child seems ready.

#### PICK A POTTY

When showing the child how to use the toilet, parents need to decide on whether to let the child use the adult potty with a trainer seat, or a child-size potty chair. Most experts agree that a potty chair is best for the new trainee. Children like to use their own potty since it belongs to them. Furthermore, by placing it next to your toilet, the child is more likely to imitate you.

Certainly your child will feel safer with their feet firmly on the ground, rather than dangling midair from the adult toilet. If the adult toilet is selected, parents should provide a stool so that the child can get onto the toilet themselves, and feel secure when sitting on it. Some children like to use their own potty since it belongs to them, others like their parents and use the adult toilet. Bottom line? It's up to you and your child!

#### PRAISE THE LITTLE THINGS AND KEEP CALM. IGNORE FAILURE.

Once the child is ready and has learned where to go, the next step is for the child to be encouraged to tell someone when they are about to have a bowel movement or urinate. Occasionally, the child will do so after the fact. Turn this into a success by praising the child for recognizing what has happened and thank them for telling you.

When the child tells you they need to go to the bathroom, go with the child to the potty. Keep the child on the potty for only a few minuets at a time. If the child doesn't go, praise them for sitting. Do not sit with them for hours reading books as the child will forget the real reason for the toilet.

Parents should praise any signs of interest, but should avoid asking the child if they have to use the toilet. Asking the question gives the child a chance to say "no' (which most do at this age) and also puts to much emphasis on the process. If you find your child using the potty as an excuse not to go to bed or do something else you have asked them to do, you are placing too much significance on the procedure. Rewarding the child with candy or other prizes should also be avoided.

It is extremely important to ignore all failures and praise all successes.

### ENCOURAGEMENT, PATIENCE, & PRAISE. THE VOICE, DO NOT RAISE.

There is no place for pressure, scolding, or punishment in the toilet training process. If there is resistance to toilet learning, it is wise to postpone it for a while. The most important thing for parents to remember is to relax, praise all successes, and ignore any failures. This will only delay the development of voluntary control and possibly lay the groundwork for a real "toilet problem" in the future.

The best approach is encouragement, patience, and praise. Make the entire process fun. Don't even mention the failures as this will add an unnecessary element of stress, further hindering the progress. Occasionally, a child will ask to go to the potty but nothing will happen. A few minutes later, the child has an accident. This may be a sign that the child is not ready for toilet learning or that there is a power struggle going on between the parent and child. In these cases, handle the accident in a matter of fact manner and say "we'll have better luck next time!"

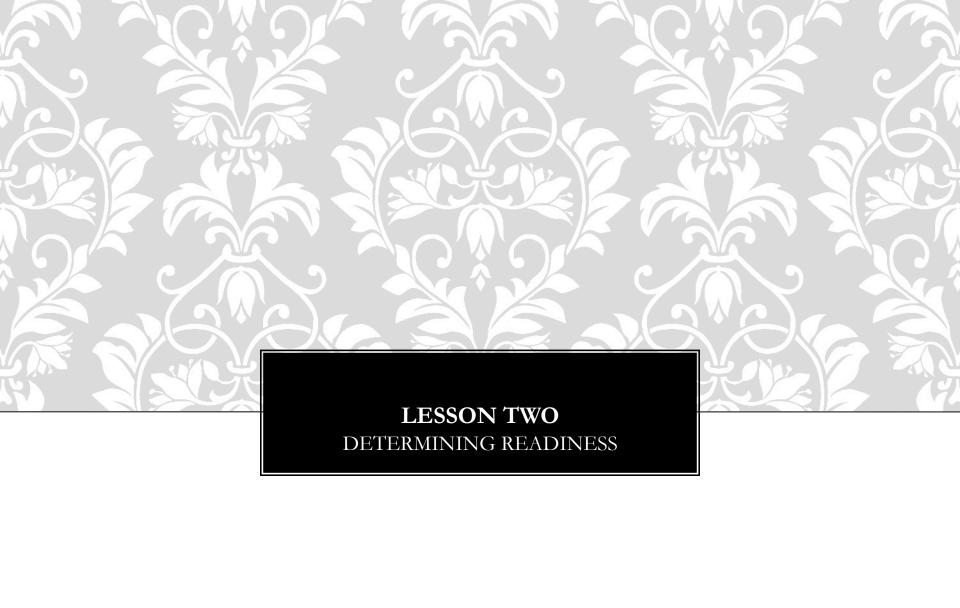
The most success comes with a relaxed, unpressured attitude.

#### DATA DRIVEN TIPS

In our experience, most children are successful with toilet learning by age two and a half, with girls easier taught than boys. The first child in a family usually achieves toilet learning slightly later than subsequent children. Even identical twins can have different behaviors on the potty, which is more evidence that the child's own developmental timetable runs the show.

The biggest mistake parents make is starting too early.

There are a variety of toilet training techniques and conflicting ideas that have been described over the last few years. This only adds to the confusion most modern day parents feel about the process! Stick with us!



## PRE-REQS FOR TOILET LEARNING

Physical Skills	Emotional Skills	Communication Skills
They can recognize the feeling of urgency	Wants to please adults	3 steps will tell you whether they're ready:
They can control the urge to go	Want to be "big" girl or boy	The child can communicate he or she has already gone or messed up in their diaper.
They are able to pull pants up and down with minimum assistance	Child likes to imitate others	The child can communicate they are in the process of eliminating.
	The Child can follow directions	The child can predict and communicate they will need to go to the toilet soon.

#### THE STATS

Most children develop control over their bowel and bladder by 18 months. This skill is necessary for children to physically be able to use the toilet. How ready a child is emotionally to begin learning to use the potty depends on the individual child. Some children are ready at 18 months, and others are ready at 3.

While every child is different, about 22% of children are out of diapers by  $2\frac{1}{2}$ , and 88% of children are out of diapers by  $3\frac{1}{2}$ .

#### THE SIGNS

Your child is ready to learn to use the toilet when s/he:

- Stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time, or after naps.
- Recognizes that s/he is urinating or having a bowel movement. For example, your child might go into another room or under the table when she has a bowel movement. This is important—if you child does not realize s/he is having a bowel movement, s/he won't be successful at potty training.
- Is developing physical skills that are critical to potty training—the ability to walk, to pull pants up and down, and to get onto/off the potty (with some help).
- Copies a parent's toileting behavior.
- Can follow simple instructions.
- Most important, your child wants to use the potty. E.g. He may tell you that he wants to wear "big boy" underpants or learn to go potty "like Daddy does." He may feel uncomfortable in a soiled diaper and ask to be changed or ask to use the toilet himself.

#### YOUR ROLE

## It is the parent's responsibility to create a supportive learning environment. This means that you:

- Recognize that your child is in control of his or her body
- Let your child decide whether to use the potty or a diaper/pull-up each day
- Teach your child words for body parts, urine, and bowel movements
- Offer your child the tools s/he needs to be successful at toileting (such as a small potty, potty seat, stool, etc.)
- Expect and handle potty accidents without anger
- Avoid punishment as well as too much praise around toilet use. (This can make children feel bad when they aren't successful.)

#### YOUR CHILD'S ROLE

### It is your child's responsibility to:

- Decide whether to use the toilet or a diaper/pull-up
- Learn his/her body's signals for when s/he needs to use the toilet
- Use the toilet at his/her own speed

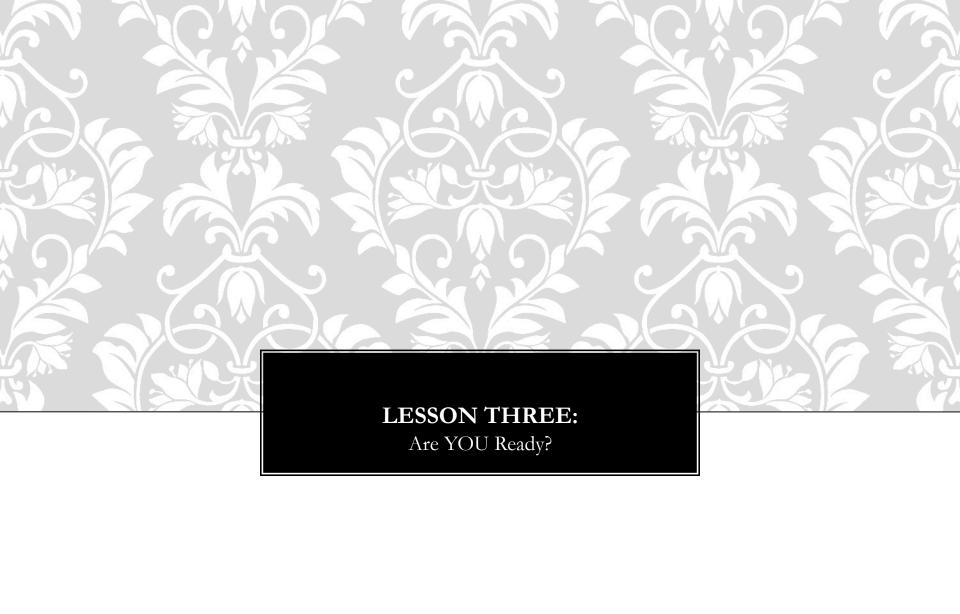
#### DO REWARDS HAVE A PLACE?

Many parents wonder about offering rewards for using the potty—a sticker, an extra sweet, or a little toy every time their child is successful on the toilet.

Although these kinds of rewards may encourage progress in the short run, the concern is that for some children, the pressure of "success" in the form of the reward creates anxiety or feelings of failure when they have a (very normal and even expected) potty accident.

The other risk is that the use of rewards for toileting can lead children to expect rewards for doing almost anything—finishing a meal, brushing teeth, etc. When parents are matter-of-fact about potty training and don't make a big deal about it, children are more likely to follow their own internal desire to reach this important milestone.

The Bottom Line? It's up to you and your child!



#### POSITIVE WORDS

Decide which words you're going to use for your child's bodily fluids. Avoid negative words, such as dirty or stinky.

#### PREP THE EQUIPMENT

Place a potty chair in the bathroom or, initially, wherever your child is spending most of his or her time. Encourage your child to sit on the potty chair in clothes to start out.

Make sure your child's feet rest on the floor or a stool, if that's what you decide. Use simple, positive terms to talk about the toilet.

You might dump the contents of a dirty diaper into the potty chair and toilet to show their purpose. Have your child flush the toilet.

#### **POTTY BREAKS**

Have your child sit on the potty chair or toilet without a diaper for a few minutes at two-hour intervals, as well as first thing in the morning and right after naps.

For boys, it's often best to master urination sitting down, and then move to standing up after bowel training is complete. Stay with your child and read a book together or play with a toy while he or she sits. Don't spend too much time though! Allow your child to get up if he or she wants. Even if your child simply sits there, offer praise for trying — and remind your child that he or she can try again later.

Bring the potty chair with you when you're away from home with your child.

#### **GET THERE FAST**

When you notice signs that your child might need to use the toilet — such as squirming, squatting or holding the genital area — respond quickly. Help your child become familiar with these signals, stop what he or she is doing, and head to the toilet. Praise your child for telling you when he or she has to go. Keep your child in loose, easy-to-remove clothing.

#### **HYGIENE**

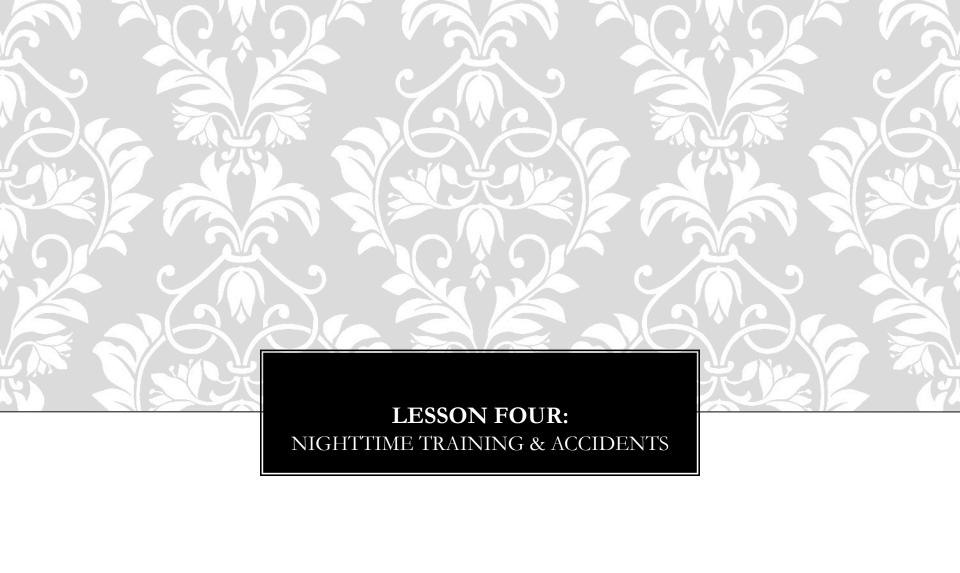
Teach girls to spread their legs and wipe carefully from front to back to prevent bringing germs from the rectum to the vagina or bladder.

Make sure your child washes his or her hands afterward.

#### DITCH THE DIAPERS

After a couple of weeks of successful potty breaks and remaining dry during the day, your child might be ready to trade diapers for training pants or underwear. Celebrate the transition.

Let your child return to diapers if he or she is unable to remain dry. Consider using a sticker or star chart for positive reinforcement *at this stage*.



### NIGHTTIME & NAPTIME TOILET TRAINING EXCEPTIONS

Nap time and nighttime training typically takes longer to achieve. Most children can stay dry at night between ages 5 and 7.

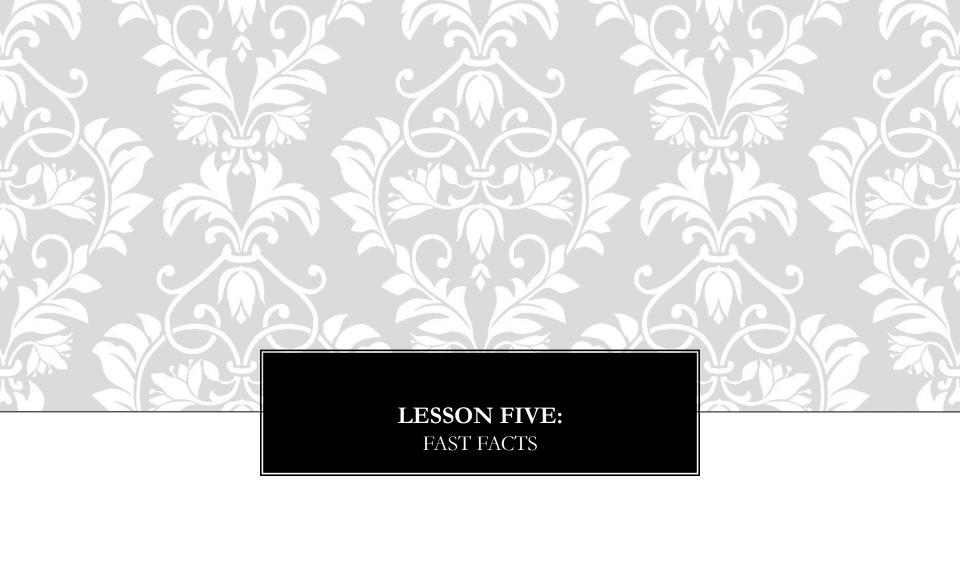
In the meantime, use disposable training pants and mattress covers when your child sleeps.

#### **ACCIDENTS**

# THEY WILL HAPPEN.

**Stay calm.** Don't scold, discipline or shame your child. You might say, "You forgot this time. Next time you'll get to the bathroom sooner."

**Be prepared.** Keep a change of underwear and clothing handy, especially at school or in child care.



#### **FAST FACTS**

- Potty training can be natural, easy, and peaceful. The first step is to know the facts.
- The perfect age to begin potty training is different for every child. Your child's best starting age could be anywhere from 18 to 32 months. Pre-potty training preparation can begin when a child is as young as ten months.
- You can begin training at any age, but your child's biology, skills, and readiness will determine when he can take over their own toileting.
- Teaching your child how to use the toilet can, and should, be as natural as teaching them to build a block tower or use a spoon.
- No matter the age that toilet training <u>begins</u>, most children become physically capable of independent toileting between ages two and a half and four.
- It takes three to twelve months from the start of training to daytime toilet independence. The more readiness skills that a child possesses, the quicker the process will be.

#### MORE FAST FACTS

- The age that a child masters toileting has <u>absolutely no correlation</u> to future abilities or intelligence.
- There isn't only one right way to potty train any approach you use can work if you are pleasant, positive and patient.
- Nighttime dryness is achieved only when a child's physiology supports this--you can't rush it.
- A parent's readiness to train is just as important as a child's readiness to learn.
- Potty training need not be expensive. A potty chair, a dozen pairs of training pants, and a relaxed and pleasant attitude are all that you really need. Anything else is truly optional!

#### **FAST FACTS END**

- Most toddlers urinate four to eight times each day, usually about every two hours or so.
- Most toddlers have one or two bowel movements each day, some have three, and others skip a day or two in between movements. In general, each child has a regular pattern.
- More than 80 percent of children experience setbacks in toilet training. This means that what we call "setbacks" are really just the usual path to mastery of toileting. Ninety-eight percent of children are completely daytime independent by age four.
- If your child is completely uninterested in learning to use the toilet or is having issues without making any progress by their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, let us know and start discussions with a medical professional as there could be an underlying medical issue. We are here to help!

#### **THANK YOU**

Submit any questions to Nancy.A.Thompson@gmail.com

Cool Resource for Dads: https://twitter.com/homedadnet/status/1361341029941706753?s=21