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Buttons

Lots of children find buttons challenging and it can take a little while for this skill to develop; plenty of practise is needed as well as lots of patience! To fasten buttons children need to have a good strong pincer grip (pinch) as well as the ability to use both of their hands together. Below are some top tips and activities to help your child develop the skills needed to master the art of buttoning!

Activities to help with buttoning

- 1. Dressing teddies and dolls** – make it fun. Get your child to dress up in your old clothes with big buttons or toggles. Let your child practice helping you!
- 2. Posting coins** – this is a great activity for helping children to develop their ‘pincer grip’ as well as developing the skill of orienting the button towards the hole. Some children find turning and posting the button a little challenging. Practise using both hands, and for extra challenge place the button in the centre of your child’s hand and encourage them to use their thumb to push the button up to their finger-tips before posting. Keep turning the moneybox/post box so that your child has to think about which direction to turn the coin.
- 3. Fishing for small toys** – place a small toy in a plastic cup, place some material with a slit in the top over the top of the cup and secure with a elastic band. Encourage your child to fish for the object by using their pinching fingers to fish for the object, pinch it and pull it back through the hole.
- 4. Threading** – this task is very similar to buttoning, post the thread through the hole and pull it through the other side. Try using laces to thread, too tricky? Use something more firm (e.g. pipe cleaners), too easy? Try threading blindfolded.
- 5. Make a buttoning caterpillar** – cut circle shapes out of craft foam and cut a button hole in the middle to match the size of your button. Attach a button to a piece of elastic and practise posting the button through, catching and pulling through the other side. Once you’ve attached all the circles, can you take them all back off again? Tip: keep thumb on top of the button.



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Top tips to practise the skill

1. Practise the skill when you are not in a rush to get dressed in a distraction free environment.
2. Start by teaching unbuttoning first as it is easier.
3. Bigger buttons are easier to manage, try these first before moving onto smaller buttons.
4. Practise with the garment on your lap or on the table in front of you, turn the garment away from you (neck hole closest to your waist) as you'll then be using the correct hands.
5. Use clear, simple and consistent language each time you practise. Start by placing thumb on top to then e.g **pinch** the button, **find** the hole, **post** the button, **catch** and **pinch** the button, **pull** the button through.
6. Remind your child to keep pinching the button.
7. Buttons that are a different colour to the clothes make it easier.
8. When buttoning, work from the bottom up, this will ensure that you don't miss a hole, these buttons are also easier to see.
9. On an old shirt make the button hole bigger by snipping it with scissors, to make practice easier.
10. Practise in front of a mirror – this really helps for collar buttons.
11. If your child is finding the task tricky, start them off and let them finish, this will help to build their confidence.
12. QR Code to be added to link to video *



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Collar and Cuff buttons

- Show your child the direction of the hole when practising collars and cuffs. The button hole is horizontal, which often causes confusion.

collar button hole



chest button hole



Struggling with Buttons?



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Try these adaptations...

1. Elastic thread (from £3.99)

Sew your buttons onto elastic thread, this will allow you to get hold of the button more easily with a neat pincer grip and manipulate the button to the hole.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/>



2. Flat elastic sewing band (from 3.99)

Sew a piece of flat elastic band across the cuffs so that your child can stretch the cuff to push their hand through.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/>



3. Collar extenders (from £5.99)

These allow a little more space to manipulate the button, this is especially useful if your collar is snug.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/>



4. Velcro (from £3.59)

Place Velcro on the inside of the fastening and sew the button permanently to the outside.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/>



5. Magnetic buttons (from £5.40)

These are similar to the type of closures you see on bags, sew these magnetic closures on the inside of the fastening and they will close more easily.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/>



6. M& S Easy Dressing range (from £9)

Easy Close Long Sleeve Shirt - the first 4 buttons have been replaced with a hidden panel of soft velcro®, this should make getting dressed quicker with less time spent fiddling with small buttons. All inside labels have also been removed for added comfort. Short sleeve version also available.

<https://www.marksandspencer.com/l/kids/easy-dressing/easy-dressing-school-uniform>

