

Dressing



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Learning to dress is an important life skill. Teaching your child how to get dressed will give them a sense of achievement, build their confidence and independence.

Getting started

Young children can start to learn the skills for dressing through play. They become aware of clothing by pulling loose items off such as their socks, hats and shoes. They will attempt to help by offering an arm, foot or lifting their leg for it to be dressed. They will learn to take off clothes without fastenings first, such as pyjamas and t-shirts. Next, they will learn to put on clothing without fastenings. Then they will be able to take off and put on their clothes with some help needed with fastenings. Eventually they will learn to manage fastenings by themselves.



Hints and tips

1. Include your baby in undressing and dressing by using nursery rhymes, action songs, naming body parts and talking about what you are doing, to make it fun and be playful. This will help your baby to know what is coming next.
2. Dressing is a lot easier if your child is sitting on a chair, on a bed or on the floor. This will help your child feel safe because they will be balanced.
3. There are different ways that children learn so you might need to change how you help them. Some children learn better with physical help guiding their hands to help them get dressed. Some children prefer to be shown, whilst others may prefer to be told what to do step by step.
4. Give them time to put on the clothing themselves, don't step in to help me too soon. Allow them time to practice when not in a rush.
5. Loose clothing is easier to manage than tight fitting clothing.



6. Don't be tempted to take over if they are stuck! Allow your child to try to work it out first before stepping in. If your child is really stuck, help them to start off but let them finish, so that they get a sense of satisfaction from finishing the job! (e.g. you could help put their sock on their foot but let them pull it up).



7. Lay the clothes out in the order that you want your child to put them on. Check they are the right way round. Encourage your child to look for pictures on the front of their clothing with labels on the back. Seams are in inside and shouldn't be seen. To turn clothes the right way round, encourage your child to put their hand inside the garment, grasp the end at the opening and pull back towards them - like magic!



8. It is helpful to look in a long mirror so that they can check that all their clothes are on correctly.



9. Take your time and be consistent as learning a new skill takes time. Your child will need lots of practice every day!

10. Make it fun with dressing up games.





Hints and tips for clothing

T-shirts and Jumpers:

- Loose clothing is easier as it is less likely to get stuck as it goes over the child's head and will give plenty of room for them to find the arm holes.
- Lay the top out flat so that the front is on their knees or table/floor/bed in front of them (it helps to have a picture on the t-shirt/jumper to identify which is the front). Ask them to find the label at the back before they put on their clothes.
- There are 2 methods to try, **either** encourage your child to put their head through first, as they can then use their eyes to know where their arms and hands have to go; **or** try encouraging your child to put their arms through the sleeve holes first so they can see where they need to put their arms before pulling the top over their head.



Pants and Trousers:

- Lay pants/ trousers out flat so that the pattern/ drawstring/ button/ zip is facing upwards and the legs are out in front of them
- It is easier for your child to be sat down to put the pants/trousers over their feet and up to their knees. Encourage them to then stand up to pull them up. (Trousers which are loose fitting and with an elasticated waist will be easier for them to manage).



Coats and Jackets:

By 2 years of age children should be able to take off an open coat, by 4 years of age they can put on an open coat, but may not manage buttons or zips.

- Practice taking off coats first as it is easier!
- Loose fitting clothing is better to start with. Make it fun by letting them put on your coat!
- Your child needs lots of practice putting their arms into sleeves. So try cardigans, pyjama tops and shirts to practice with.
- If your child is struggling it can be tempting to take over - don't! Give your child time to work it out for themselves. Give them lots of encouragement and hints if you need to. If needed, talk them through what to do and only step in if they get really stuck. Make sure you have got plenty of time to practice.
- There are different ways to put coats on, try them all and see what works best for your child.

Socks and Shoes:

Putting on socks and shoes needs both hands and is often a challenge. Babies love to pull socks off by themselves by the time they are 15 months old. By 2 years old children can pull on wellies and slippers.



Socks

- Practice with loose fitting socks that are too big.
- Socks with different coloured toes and heels can help get socks in the correct place and find the top of the sock so that the heel is underneath.
- Encourage your child to sit down so not to lose their balance when putting on socks as reaching their feet can be tricky when putting on or taking off socks and shoes. They may be steadier if they can cross their leg onto their knee or rest it on a box/stool. They can then use both my hands to help.
- You may find it helpful to start by placing the sock over your child's toes to start with and then allow them to pull the sock up over their heel and ankle. Encourage them to place both thumbs and grip hard to assist in pulling socks onto their foot. Remind them not to let go before the sock is over the heel!
- Show them how to gather up the sock from the top to the heel using both their hands before putting the sock over their toes.
- If they do not like the feel of the seams in their socks, try turning the socks inside out before looking at buying seamless socks.

Shoes

- Avoid laces or buckles starting with slippers and wellies to practice with.
- Place shoes in front of them the correct way round. A tip is to cut a sticker in half and stick one half into each shoe. This will help them to work out which shoe goes on which foot by matching them up.
- Sitting down to keep a good balance whilst lifting up each foot is important to not lose their balance.
- Get your child to check their feet, to see if they are on the right feet (do they feel comfortable?).
- Shoes with Velcro, buckles and laces will be the next steps once they have achieved slip on shoes.



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