

Dressing Skills



INTRODUCTION

When practicing dressing skills it is important to -

- Make the experience as fun as possible and to avoid dressing being a chore.
- Allow plenty of time, don't rush—maybe start at weekends or holidays
- Begin with easy, small steps
- Give your child the opportunity to do more for themselves
- Give praise and encouragement

HOW TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD

The adult starts the task and the child completes the last stage e.g. adult starts the zip and the child pulls the zip up. Gradually the adult does less and the child does more until they are fully independent.

TOP TIPS

- Use loose fitting, lightweight clothing
- Avoid lots of layers and difficult fastenings
- Use wide neck and wide sleeve tops
- Encourage dressing up
- Some children may find it easier to sit on the bed or a chair with their feet supported
- Provide hand over hand assistance
- Wear t-shirts, sweat shirts, pants etc with a picture on the front. Point the picture out to the child
- Roll up clothing to create 'more' to grip, e.g. roll up bottom edge of the t-shirt before putting on
- Try different ways of getting dressed e.g. put arms in first then pull clothing over head or head in first then arms.
- Point out labels on the inside of garments
- Lay clothes flat in front of child

SOCKS

- Do not use tight socks
- Use socks with marked or coloured toes and heels



CHILD PUTS SHOES ON WRONG FEET

- Place the shoes together and mark the inside of the shoes with a marker pen

BUTTONS

- Practice doing buttons outside of dressing time to make it more of a game
- Practice on other peoples clothes, with buttons laid out flat in front of them
- Use large buttons first with loose button holes and work down to smaller buttons
- When practicing on themselves it is easier to start with the furthest away button and move closer to their chin as they go
- Reduce initial frustration by replacing buttons with Velcro fastenings or using elastic at shirt cuffs until skill is learned.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT DRESSING SKILLS

- Musical dressing up (a variation of musical chairs): the children put items of clothing on from a pile until the music stops, at the end of the game the child with the most clothes on is the winner.
- Using a variety of large shirts or smocks, get the children to get ready for wet play, painting or cooking.
- Button boards, play cubes, cloth button or popper books to give the child practice types of fastenings.
- Dressing dolls/bears give good practice opportunities
- Matching sock game. Place a variety of socks in a pile, and your child has to find pairs and put them on.
- Package wrapping. Making parcels and tying them up with different sorts of ties.
- Play 'Simon Says' and get your child to identify various body parts.
- Complete threading activities. Getting them to copy a pattern of various sized beads on thread
- Complete lacing activities using lacing boards to develop fine motor skills such as grip, release and eye-hand co-ordination.
- Posting coins. Let your child use pincer (finger and thumb) grip to post coins into a money box. This will help develop pre-button skills

FURTHER INFORMATION

DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST OF DRESSING SKILLS:

(Mary Sheridan – Children’s developmental progress)

12 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps with dressing by holding out arm for sleeve and foot for shoe. • Cooperative in dressing. • Likes to pull shoes off.
18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes off shoes, socks, hat but rarely able to put back on
2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puts on hat and shoes. • Removes unfastened coat. • Helps push down garments • Finds arm holes in t-shirt
2 and a half years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries to put on socks • Undresses loose pull down garment
3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to put on shoes without fastening (may be wrong foot) • Can pull zips up and down, but unable to insert or separate shank
4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T-Shirt on/off independently but may be back to front. • Pull up garments on independently
5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dresses and undresses independently but may still need help with small buttons, zips and laces. • Clothing may still be put on back-to front on occasion. • These ages are a guide only, but can help determine a young child’s readiness for dressing independently

DIFFERENT WAYS TO LEARN DRESSING SKILLS

Backward Chaining

Here the adult begins the task, with the child only doing the last step. Gradually the adult does less as the child is able to do more of the task themselves. This way the child always gets the reward of finishing the task, e.g. the adult puts the T-shirt over the child’s head and helps them to get their arms through the holes. The child then pulls down the t-shirt at the front.

An Example Of Backward Chaining

Taking off a sock:

Step 1; The adult pulls down the sock over the ankle and the heel then let the child pull sock off their foot.

Step 2; The adult pulls the sock down over the ankle to the heel then let the child pull the sock off from the heel.

Step 3; Let the child take their sock off independently.

Forward Chaining

This is when the child starts the task (e.g., putting the T-shirt over their head), and the adult helps with the later stages the child needs help with (e.g., putting their arms through the sleeves). The child needs to be motivated to begin the task themselves. Always demonstrate the correct technique first, telling your child what you are doing at each stage e.g. I am unbuttoning the shirt, I am taking your arm out of the sleeve, and so on. Try to maintain the same order of this activity time for consistency.