



Parent Notes

Introduction

Toilet Learning

Contents

In brief
Introduction
The Signposts toilet learning materials
Toileting words and phrases
Toilet learning readiness
Before you begin: Health check
Getting prepared
Goals and action plans
Sticker placement
Summary

In brief

In this introduction you will:

- learn that toileting involves many skills; teaching these skills must be thorough and systematic.
- understand how toileting skills will benefit the whole family, giving your child more independence and also saving you money.
- be introduced to some common toileting words and phrases.
- learn ideas for assessing your child's readiness.
- learn what is needed for a health check.

Legend for Signposts Toilet Learning icons



When you see this sticker in generic modules or workbook refer to toilet learning parent notes.



Turn to generic workbook and complete exercises.



Return to generic module to continue.



Use sheet in toilet learning parent notes to record behaviour or skills.

Toilet learning - Introduction

The Toilet Learning materials are supplementary resources to be used with the *Signposts building for better behaviour* program (workbook, modules 1-5 and other resources). These extra resources will help you to work on your child's behaviours related specifically to toileting.

What is toilet learning?

Using the toilet successfully involves many skills. Some of these skills – such as pulling pants down, climbing onto the toilet and pulling pants up – can be shown to your child, but other skills – such as relaxing and passing urine or a bowel motion into the toilet – are difficult to demonstrate. For adults toileting seems so easy yet toileting requires children to understand a series of skills that can take some time for them to learn.

Because many children with an intellectual disability or a developmental delay learn more slowly than typically developing children, teaching needs to be thorough and systematic. The process of acquiring these skills, gaining knowledge and experiencing new routines is in fact a learning process and this is why the term 'toilet learning' is used rather than 'toilet training'.

Benefits of toilet learning

There are many benefits for your child when toileting learning is mastered. Just think about how being more independent in toileting could affect your child's quality of life, not to mention your own. Although the process of toilet learning can be frustrating for parents, it is worth persisting as there are many benefits for the whole family.

Children with toileting skills are more independent and can access the community more readily. Outings are easier for parents and carers.

There is also a huge cost saving to be made by reducing the number of nappies and pull-ups you need to buy.

The Signposts toilet learning materials

The Signposts toilet learning materials have been developed as supplements to the *Signposts for building better behaviour* program. When you complete the Signposts program, you will have learned skills to help you to develop your child's toileting skills and also manage difficult behaviours.

As you work through the Signposts program and use the Parent Program DVD, keep in mind your child's current toileting behaviour. When setting a goal for the end of the program and developing your action plan, focus on your child's current toileting behaviour and what can be built upon.

IN FOCUS

Bedwetting

Many children do not develop the skills to stay dry overnight until six years of age, and for children with a disability it can be longer. For more information about bedwetting see the Raising Children website at www.raisingchildren.net.au, and also contact the Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 (8 am – 8 pm).

Toileting words and phrases

The act of attending the toilet is a very private event for many people. Most of us don't openly discuss our bodily functions. Some parents are quite comfortable talking about toileting issues, while others may feel uneasy.

Here are definitions of some of the words and phrases used in the Signposts toilet learning materials:

Toilet learning: the act, process, or experience of gaining knowledge to develop toileting skills

Toileting opportunity: an opportunity for a child to practise toileting skills. A toileting opportunity for one child may be sitting on the toilet seat for 1–3 minutes, while another child's opportunity may be standing at the toilet door. If a child is already passing urine in the toilet, his toileting opportunity could be centred on bowel motions.

Attending the toilet: going to the room where the toilet is installed and practising toileting skills.

Passing urine: considered 'appropriate' when it is in the toilet (or potty). For the exercise of toilet learning, inappropriate passing of urine is anywhere apart from in the toilet (or potty).

The idea of 'passing urine' can be expressed with many different words, such as 'weeing', 'voiding' and 'doing a tinkle'.

Passing a bowel motion: also known as 'faeces', 'poo' and 'poo-poops'. Many families have their own special word to describe bowel motions.

IN FOCUS

Toileting language

It's important that everybody in your child's life uses the same words for the same things when talking about toileting.

Many families have their own words to describe particular bodily functions and body parts. If you use more universally known words (such as toilet, wee and poo) when talking to your child, they will have a better chance of communicating their needs with other carers and adults (such as teachers).

Words such as bottom, bum, vagina and penis are all words for body parts that are used when learning toilet skills. Passing urine or wee and bowel motion or poo are also used.

If you prefer to use words from another language or special in-family words, make sure all the adults or carers that spend time with your child are aware of these words, their meaning and the correct way of saying the words.

Toilet learning readiness

Many people are unsure what to look for when deciding if their child is ready to learn toilet skills. Many children are not ready to learn toileting skills until the age of two or three years. Children with learning difficulties may start later and take longer.

One of the indicators of readiness is length of time between wettings. It was easier to work this out when cloth nappies were the norm – a child might wet the cloth nappy, feel uncomfortable and remove the nappy due to the discomfort. Also, it was easier to see when the nappy was wet. With disposable nappies as the norm now, it's not so easy - disposable nappies mask the feelings of wetness. Most children are happy to continue to wear a wet disposable nappy because they still feel dry.

Typical bladder/bowel development is as follows:

- **At 9 months to 1 year** a child develops control of his bowel motions during sleep. If your child is waking with a bowel motion in his nappy it is most likely occurring when he is awake and then going back to sleep.
- **At 18 months to 2 years** children will be aware that they are passing urine and/or bowel motions.
- **At 4 to 5 years** a child's central nervous system has developed and he can 'hold-on' to urine or bowel motions for a longer period of time. Children with developmental delay or intellectual disability could display these milestones later than other children. Before this age, a child can use the muscles in his pelvis to stop urine or bowel movements.

IN FOCUS

Toilet learning readiness skills

- can understand and follow simple one or two step instructions
- can sit unassisted
- responds well to praise and rewards
- is free from urinary tract infections and constipation
- passes urine at 1½–2 hour intervals or more

Before you begin: Health check

Most children can be taught toileting skills without medical intervention. However before you start using the Signposts toilet learning materials, it is important to ensure that your child is free from common childhood medical conditions, such as constipation and urinary tract infections, which may affect the ability to successfully control urine or bowel motions.

If your child experiences any of the listed symptoms have your doctor do a check-up before starting toilet learning.

If you are unsure if your child has any medical conditions that may impact on his ability to learn toileting skills, take him to your doctor for a check-up or call the National Continence Helpline and discuss the issue with a Continence Nurse Advisor. In most cases a minor medical condition can be treated quickly and you can continue with the toilet learning as planned.

It may still be possible to complete the toilet learning program if your child has a known medical condition that affects his bowel or bladder function. This can be done with support from your paediatrician or medical specialist. Discuss toilet learning with a professional and ask if there are any issues you should be aware of before commencing the program.

To discuss any of the symptoms on the list with a continence nurse, call:

National Continence Helpline

Freecall 1800 330 066

Monday to Friday: 8 am – 8 pm

Symptoms of constipation or urinary tract infection

- ☐ Sometimes cries or complains of pain when passing a bowel motion.
- ☐ Avoids passing a bowel motion due to discomfort.
- ☐ Passes unusually large bowel motions.
- ☐ Has a significant number of unusually loose bowel motions.
- ☐ Has small tears (anal fissures) around the anus.
- ☐ Sometimes cries or complains of pain when passing urine.
- ☐ Passes urine more frequently than usual.
- ☐ Passes offensive-smelling urine.
- ☐ Passes cloudy or darker coloured urine.
- ☐ Feels unwell and has a high temperature.
- ☐ Has stomach aches or cramps.
- ☐ Shows less interest in food than usual.

Getting Prepared

Learning toileting skills involves lots of practise on the toilet. Before you start the program, make sure your toilet is a safe and comfortable environment for your child.

| CHECK | TIPS |
|---|--|
| Is my toilet/bathroom area free from bottles of cleaning products, chemicals and medications? | Make sure your toilet/bathroom is a child-friendly room and that there is no potential for harm. |
| Does my child have a range of loose, washable clothing that he can easily remove? | Your child can wear loose underpants, boxers, short or tracksuit pants, t-shirts or tops (not dresses or skirts). |
| If my child can sit on the toilet is he balanced and relaxed? Are his feet well supported by either a step (available at most department stores or specialist stores), a box or (for older children) the floor? | Make sure your child can sit on the toilet without holding on to the edge. Also make sure your child can sit on the toilet with both feet flat on a hard surface. His feet should not dangle or be on tiptoes. |
| Does my child need a toilet seat? | A toilet seat, also called a toilet reducer (available at department stores and specialty stores), can be fitted over the top of the adult seat. Your child might feel safer and more relaxed sitting on a seat with a smaller opening. The reducer needs to fit firmly over the toilet seat and not move or slide around. |
| Do I need another set of toileting equipment for another location? | If your child spends a considerable amount of time at another place you may need to buy another set of toileting equipment. |
| Are the toilets at my child's child care/ kindergarten/playgroup/early intervention program etc. suitable? | Most schools and children's centres have smaller and lower child-size toilets so additional toileting equipment is not necessary but it is still worth checking to ensure your child can use the toilet easily. |

Goals and action plans

In Module 1 you begin your Action Plan by recording your description of a difficult behaviour and how you plan to measure it. In Module 2 you will choose a toileting goal. Consider your child's current skill level and perhaps start with a smaller goal. For example, if your child won't yet take a step into the toilet or bathroom, your goal may be for your child to simply walk into the room and sit on the toilet briefly. If your child has already developed the skills to sit on the toilet, it may be a realistic goal for your child to pass urine or a bowel motion into the toilet.

Examples of toileting goals

- » Finds the toilet in the house.
- » Requests the toilet either verbally, using sign language or picture exchange.
- » Enters the toilet or bathroom.
- » Gets onto the toilet.
- » Sits on the toilet briefly – less than 30 seconds.
- » Flushes the toilet.
- » Cooperates with all nappy/pull-ups changes in the toilet/bathroom.
- » Shows you that he understands that urine and bowel motions go into the toilet.
- » Passes urine into the toilet.
- » Passes bowel motions into the toilet.
- » Wipes bottom after passing urine or bowel motions.
- » Uses the correct amount of toilet paper when wiping.
- » Sits on the toilet for 2–3 minutes.
- » Washes hands – including turning on taps, using soap and drying hands.
- » Uses the toilet for passing urine and bowel motions at home.
- » Uses toileting skills in other environments (e.g. at a relative's house).
- » Uses public toilets for passing urine and bowel motions (e.g. at a shopping centre).
- » Pulls pants down or up.

Module sticker placement

One of the first tasks in the toilet learning program is to place a 'toilet sticker' at appropriate places in your Signposts workbook and modules. The stickers will refer you to the toilet learning materials.

An A4 sheet of stickers is available in the Parent Resources. Print out the stickers onto a sheet with adhesive backing. Place the stickers in the positions indicated below and tick the boxes as you complete this part of setting up.

Once you have completed placing the stickers, put a toilet sticker on the cover of your Signposts workbook and each module so you know which one has been linked to the toilet learning materials.

Module 1 - Measuring your child's behaviour

| Page | Sticker placement | Completed |
|------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Overview, at start of paragraph | |
| 3 | Under smiley face | |
| 6 | Under smiley face | |
| 9 | At behaviour recording chart | |
| 12 | Summary, at start of paragraph | |
| 13 | Homework, under smiley face | |

Module 2 - Systematic use of daily interactions

| Page | Sticker placement | Completed |
|------|---|-----------|
| 1 | Overview, at start of paragraph | |
| 3 | Bottom of page, under smiley face | |
| 4 | Under last paragraph | |
| 8 | Bottom of page, under smiley face | |
| 17 | Setting up household rules, at start of paragraph | |
| 20 | Summary, at start of paragraph | |
| 21 | Your homework, under smiley face | |

Module 3 – Replacing difficult behaviour with useful behaviour

| Page | Sticker placement | Completed |
|------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Overview, at start of paragraph | |
| 6 | Under smiley face | |
| 7 | Escaping from a task, under smiley face | |
| 7 | Obtaining physical pleasure, under smiley face | |
| 12 | Selecting an alternative behaviour, at start of paragraph | |
| 14 | Ensuring no consequences follows the difficult behaviour, at start of paragraph | |
| 15 | Providing negative consequences for the difficult behaviour, at start of paragraph | |
| 16 | Taking away privileges, above smiley face | |
| 20 | When the purpose is sometimes acceptable, at start of paragraph | |
| 21 | When the purpose is to gain attention, at start of paragraph | |

Module 4 – Planning for better behaviour

| Page | Sticker placement | Completed |
|------|---|-----------|
| 1 | Overview, at start of paragraph | |
| 3 | Last paragraph, under smiley face | |
| 5 | Identifying high-risk situations, under smiley face | |
| 6 | Planned activity routines, at start of paragraph | |
| 8 | Implementing a planned activities routine, start of paragraph | |
| 10 | Under last smiley face | |
| 11 | Summary, at start of paragraph | |
| 12 | Your homework, under smiley face | |

Module 5 – Developing more skills in your child

| Page | Sticker placement | Completed |
|------|---|-----------|
| 1 | Overview, at start of paragraph | |
| 2 | Selecting the skills to teach, at start of paragraph | |
| 4 | Under smiley face | |
| 5 | Writing objectives for the skills you will teach, at start of paragraph | |
| 6 | Under smiley face | |
| 8 | Breaking a skill into parts, at start of paragraph | |
| 9 | Teaching by showing, at start of paragraph | |
| 10 | Step-by-step teaching, at start of paragraph | |
| 12 | Negotiating and liaising with others who are teaching your child, at start of paragraph | |
| 15 | Summary, at start of paragraph | |
| 16 | Your homework, under smiley face | |

Workbook sticker placement

Workbook Module 1

| Page | Placement | Completed |
|------|---------------|-----------|
| A-2 | Exercise 1C | |
| A-2 | Exercise 1D | |
| A-4 | Exercise 1F | |
| A-4 | Exercise 1G | |
| A-11 | Your homework | |

Workbook Module 2

| Page | Placement | Completed |
|------|--|-----------|
| B-2 | Exercise 2C | |
| B-11 | Triggers and consequences record sheet | |

Workbook Module 3

No stickers required.

Workbook Module 4

| Page | Placement | Completed |
|------|-------------|-----------|
| D-1 | Exercise 4A | |
| D-2 | Exercise 4B | |

Workbook Module 5

| Page | Placement | Completed |
|------|-------------|-----------|
| E-1 | Exercise 5A | |
| E-2 | Exercise 5B | |

Summary of Supplementary Parent Notes

Introduction

In the introduction you learn about the benefits of toileting skills for the whole family, including your child.

The introduction explains how to use the supplementary toilet learning materials with the *Signposts for building better behaviour* program materials.

Common toileting words and phrases are discussed, you learn ideas for assessing your child's readiness, and you learn whether your child needs a health check.

Module 1

Signposts begins by teaching you to describe, measure and record your child's behaviour.

In this module you describe your child's existing skills and how he uses them when attending the toilet. You begin to record information on a Pants Check sheet, using a wetness indicator to help you determine when your child passes urine. You also begin your toileting action plan.

Module 2

This module is about using your daily interactions to systematically foster behaviours of your child that you like, and not to support those behaviours that you do not like.

During this time you look at triggers and consequences, particularly when changing your child's nappy/pull-up. You also consider all the different skills needed to attend the toilet and what skills your child already has. You also think of learning opportunities to assist your child further develop his toileting skills.

You establish some 'toilet rules' and consider how you can make attending the toilet easier for your child with the possible use of equipment. Module 2 also looks at ways to give clear instructions when instructing your child to attend the toilet.

Module 3

The focus in this module is on ways of replacing difficult behaviour with useful behaviour.

You recognise that using a nappy could be a preferred activity for your child. You begin to consider attending the toilet as alternative behaviour and think of ways of encouraging this behaviour by giving your child toilet learning opportunities at set times.

You also begin to use nappy changing times as a learning opportunity to assist your child to learn toileting skills. This module helps you to understand the reasons your child displays difficult behaviour.

Module 4

Here you will focus on routines and planning for those occasions when difficult behaviour is most likely to occur.

You develop a Toileting Opportunities sheet by referring back to your Pants Check sheet and daily routine list. This will help you to establish set times throughout the day to provide your child with opportunities to use the toilet.

You consider the skills involved with toileting and establish a planned activity routine for when you provide your child with toileting opportunities. When your child demonstrates preferred behaviour you give your child positive consequences, such as a reward. You also plan for toileting your child in high-risk situations.

Module 5

Module 5 focuses on ways to teach new skills.

While modules 1-5 all include some elements of skill building in your child, if you are still helping your child to learn toileting skills, this module provides you with an opportunity to write down some toileting objectives while continuing to regularly toilet your child using your Toileting Opportunities sheet. Module 5 also reinforces the need to break toileting into different skills; learn about teaching by showing and by using step-by-step instructions.

Dealing with stress in your family

There are no supplementary parent notes for *Dealing with stress in your family*. Continue to use the generic Signposts program module to help you deal with these issues. This module helps you identify what stresses you and ways to manage stress so that you are able to make best use of the program.

Your family as a team

There are no supplementary parent notes for *Your family as a team*. Continue to use the generic Signposts program module to help you think about these issues. This module helps you think about how to work as a team and support one another as you make changes in the ways you are managing your child's difficult behaviour.

Resources

Introduces valuable resources and services which may enhance your program.