

Top tips for starting potty training children with Down syndrome and other learning disabilities

1. Start early

Introduce sitting on the potty when your child is about 9 months old. By then weaning should be well established and poos are becoming more predictable. If your child has poor balance, they may need the support of a potty chair. If this is the case, speak to their OT.

2. Always change your child's nappy in the bathroom

This helps your child understand that this is where wees and poos should happen.

3. Tip any solid poo into the toilet

This will help your child learn that poos should go in the toilet.

4. Change your child's nappy with them standing up when they are steady on their feet

This allows your child to get more involved with the process.

5. Get your child used to sitting on different potties and toilets

This helps your child understand that they can use different toilets/potties and prevents problems with them not wanting to use somewhere different when you are out.

6. If your child is reluctant to sit on/use the potty put an open nappy over it

Your child is used to using a nappy so they may not recognise that the potty is where they should now do a wee/poo. A nappy over the potty is familiar and makes them feel safe.

7. Use a timer, such as one on your phone to slowly increase the time your child sits on the potty or toilet

You can set the timer for a very short time to start with (e.g. 10 seconds) and show your child that they can get off the potty or toilet when the bell rings. Slowly increase the time they sit.

8. Use praise and rewards to help your child want to work with you on toilet training

Lots of praise or a very small reward for using the potty will encourage your child to want to sit the next time you take them to the potty or toilet.

9. Use cotton pants or trainer pants when you start formal toilet training

When your child is used to sitting on the potty or toilet use washable cotton or trainer pants. These allow your child to feel wet if they have an accident. This is part of the learning process. Disposable pants feel the same as nappies and may not help them to understand that they should now go on the potty or toilet when they want a wee or poo.

10. Be consistent: Once you have started don't give up

It is important that the toilet training is done the same way at home, nursery/school or with family. Everyone needs to approach it the same way, or your child might get confused.

For more information visit www.bbuk.org/children-young-people/children/resources/ or contact Bladder & Bowel UK helpline at bbuk@disabledliving.co.uk or telephone 0161 607 8219