

Getting Dressed for Preschoolers

Positioning:

Have your child sit against the wall for stability while dressing

Step by Step:

Use backward chaining- let your child start the task, and you finish it (for example, he/she puts the sock on over the toes, and then you pull it up over the heel).

Hand-over-hand assistance:

Use gentle movements. If he/she does not like the physical assistance, talk about your hands and his/her hands working together as a team to get the job done.

Expectations:

Don't expect too much at first, but do expect participation!

Timing:

Try to find a time that is not rushed and that is motivating, such as getting changed for an activity he/she enjoys (swimming, playground, etc.).

Modeling:

Let your child watch you or siblings get dressed and he/she can try to imitate. Dressing together may be more fun and motivating than on his/her own.

Choice of clothing:

Choose loose, comfortable fabrics and Velcro shoes. Avoid too many fasteners at first.

Sequencing:

Using pictures showing the correct sequence for dressing can be used for children that have difficulty planning the sequencing required. For example, the pictures could say:

1. Underwear, 2. Shirt, 3. Pants, 4. Socks, 5. Shoes, 6. Sweater. You can use pictures cut out of magazines, or actual photos of your child's clothes.

The "flip method" for putting on a jacket:

- *Your child sits or stands on the floor.*
- *Lay the jacket down on the floor with the top of the jacket label/hood closest to your child and the inside of the jacket facing up.*
- *Your child pushes arms into the armholes, then flips the jacket up over head.*

Another approach is to place the hood of the jacket on your child's head. The jacket is then in position to put arms into the sleeves.

Dressing skills in order of difficulty:

- Taking off hat (15-16.5 months) and mittens
- Taking off socks (15-18 months) and shoes
- Putting on hat (16.5-18.5 months)
- Taking off unfastened jacket
- Pulling down (24-26 months) and taking off pants
- Pulling shirt on/off the head
- Pulling zippers up and down (18-21 months)
- Putting on jacket using the “flip method”
- Unbuttoning (24-25 months)
- Taking off loose pajamas
- Putting legs in pants and pulling up (36-38 months)
- Putting arms in sleeves of shirt (once shirt is over head)
- Putting boots and shoes on (21-30 months)
- Putting socks on (39-44 months)
- Pulling arms out of sleeves (40 months)
- Putting shirt over the head and putting arms through (36 months)
- Putting on jacket without using flip method
- Putting on front-opening shirt (36-42 months)
- Buttoning (30-36 months)
- Starting a zipper and zipping up
- Tying shoelaces (66-78 months)