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Overcoming toilet training inertia: The bare-bottom weekend

If your child is over 30 months old, has successfully used the potty a few times with your help, and clearly understands the process, committing six hours or a weekend exclusively to toilet training can lead to a breakthrough. Avoid interruptions or distractions during this time. Younger siblings must spend the day elsewhere. Turn off the TV, and don't answer the telephone. Success requires monitoring your child during training hours.

The bare-bottom technique means that your child does not wear diapers, pull-ups, underwear, or any clothing below the waist. This causes most children to become acutely aware of their body's plumbing. They dislike pee or poop running down their legs.

You and your child must stay in the vicinity of the potty chair, which can be placed in the kitchen or another room without a carpet. A gate across the doorway may help your child stay on task. During bare-bottom times, refrain from all practice runs and most reminders. Allow your child to learn by trial and error with your support.

Create a frequent need to urinate by offering your child lots of their favorite fluids. Have just enough toys and books handy to keep your child playing near the potty chair. Keep the process upbeat with hugs, smiles, and good cheer. You are your child's coach and ally.

If your child resists training

Request the parent guide on toilet training resistance if:

- Your 2 1/2 year old child is negative about toilet training.
- Your child is over 3 years old and not daytime toilet trained.
- Your child won't sit on the potty or toilet.
- Your child holds back bowel movements.
- The approach described here isn't working after 6 months.

Books on toilet training for parents

Parent's Book of Toilet Teaching, by Joanna Cole (New York, Ballantine Books, 1999)

Mommy! I Have to Go Potty! A Parent's Guide to Toilet Training, by Jan Faull (Raefield-Roberts Publishers, 1996)

Toilet Learning: The Picture Book Technique for Children and Parents, by Alison Mack (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1983)

Toilet Training Without Tears, by Charles E. Schaefer (New York, Signet, 1997)

Potty Training for Dummies, by Diane Stafford and Jennifer Shoquist (New York, Hungry Minds, 2002)

Potty Training Your Baby, by Katie Val Pelt (New York, Signet, 2002)

The American Academy of Pediatrics Guide to Toilet Training, (New York, Bantam Books, 2003)

Keys to Toilet Training, by Meg Zweiback (Hauppauge, NY, Barron's Educational Series, 1998)