

# Supporting Toileting for Children with Disabilities



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# Introduction

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Do you find toilet training a child with developmental disabilities hard?

You are not alone! Every child has the potential to succeed with patience, teamwork, and the right supports!



## Purpose of Guide:

This guide was created to help any individual supporting children with disabilities as they work towards independent toileting. Toileting is an important activity of daily living (ADL) that directly impacts a child’s confidence, participation, and access to inclusive environments.<sup>1-2</sup> For many children with disabilities, toileting can be challenging. However, every child can have the opportunity to thrive in welcoming and supportive environments.

Whether you’re just getting started or looking for new strategies, this resource is designed to promote independence for children with disabilities through toileting. This resource shares up-to-date, evidence-based strategies to help make the toileting process more successful for everyone involved!



## State of Ohio Resource

### Guidance on Diapering and Toileting Hygiene in Ohio Schools.

[This guidance](#) (from Ohio’s Departments of Children & Youth, Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Education & Workforce) explains that Ohio public schools cannot refuse enrollment or services to a child because they need toileting or diapering support. It outlines guiding principles (privacy, dignity, least restrictive environment, consent/communication, safety safeguards), best-practice procedures for diapering and toileting hygiene (PPE, sanitation, documentation, supplies, handling soiled clothing), and encourages team-based planning with families. It also discusses possible medical/other causes of incontinence and includes a sample “Routine Personal Care Plan” template plus ideas for assistive technology that can increase independence.

# Occupational Therapy and Toileting

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Occupational therapy helps people participate in the everyday activities that matter most to them.<sup>3</sup> Occupational therapists (OTs) help children learn skills to support increased independence and participation in daily occupations, such as toileting.

In occupational therapy, *occupations* are the everyday activities that bring our lives purpose and meaning. Common examples include self-care, play, sleep, work, and spending time with others.<sup>3</sup> OTs work with families to create individualized plans that help children participate in routines and gain independence.

This guide was created based on OT principles - offering strategies that reflect a family-centered approach to support the toileting process for children with disabilities.



## Did You Know?

- Up to 70% of children with autism experience delays in toilet training.<sup>4</sup>
- Nearly half (49%) of children with autism resist toilet training. This is much more common than in children with other developmental delays (24%) or in the general population (8%).<sup>5</sup>
- Many child care centers and preschools require children to be toilet trained before enrollment. This can create barriers for children with developmental disabilities.<sup>2</sup>
- Children with disabilities are more likely to experience toileting delays that continue beyond age 5. This can impact participating in the classroom and socializing with others.<sup>6</sup>

# Why Toileting Matters

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## → Toileting is a Skill – Everyone’s Got to Go!

- Toileting is a pivotal activity of daily living (ADL) that children learn as they grow and develop. This skill is essential for self-care and hygiene. When children can manage their own toileting needs, they gain independence, purpose, and confidence.<sup>1</sup>

## → Improves Quality of Life

- Learning to use the toilet can boost a child’s confidence. It increases self-worth by helping the child feel more in control of their body. When a child can take care of themselves, they feel more independent.<sup>7</sup>

## → Reduces Caregiver Dependence and Stress

- Managing toileting accidents can be stressful for families and the child. When children begin to show toileting progress, families feel more confident in helping their child and days are less stressful for all.<sup>7-8</sup>

## → Encourages Participation in Everyday Activities

- With successful toileting, children can join in on more activities at home, school, and in the community. This helps build friendships, provides new learning opportunities, and encourages meaningful participation in everyday activities and routines.<sup>9</sup>

# Understanding Barriers to Toileting

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Many children with **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** or other **Developmental Disabilities (DD)** experience barriers with toileting due to internal challenges, external environmental factors, or a combination of both.<sup>4</sup> Let's explore some common barriers...

## Common Barriers to Toileting

### → Sensory Sensitivities

- Some children experience the bathroom very differently because of how their senses work. Some children may be very aware (over-responsive) of things like sounds, lights, smells, or how things feel, while others may barely notice them (under-responsive).<sup>4</sup> For example, the loud sound of a toilet flushing, bright lights, the smell of #1 and #2, or even the feeling of a cold seat can be uncomfortable, or barely noticeable! These sensory differences may lead to fear, discomfort, or even refusal to use the toilet.

### → Interoception (Body Awareness)

- Some children struggle to notice the internal signals their body sends, like the feeling of needing to use the bathroom. This sense is called interoception. Challenges with interoception are common in children with autism and often lead to frequent accidents or confusion about when to go to the bathroom.<sup>10</sup>

### → Transition and Routine Disruption

- Children with disabilities often have difficulty with transitioning away from an activity or shifting attention. Predictable routines help children feel safe and regulated, so change may be challenging. Transitioning from a preferred routine or activity, especially in busy environments like the classroom, can lead to interfering behaviors and accidents when not properly supported.<sup>11</sup>

### → Behavioral Challenges

- Interfering behaviors (e.g. biting, hitting, etc.) are common during toilet training. These are typically connected to factors like sensory sensitivities, communication barriers, or difficulty coping with change.<sup>5</sup>

### → Gastrointestinal (GI) Issues

- Children with autism typically experience higher rates of chronic GI symptoms that may interfere with toilet training.<sup>12</sup> This can include symptoms like constipation or diarrhea, which can make toileting painful, frustrating, and unpredictable.<sup>4</sup>

### → Communication Barriers

- Children with developmental disabilities may have delays with their verbal communication, making it difficult to express the need to use the bathroom. This can be frustrating for both child and caregiver. Communication strategies, such as pictures or simple signs, can help lead to success.<sup>13</sup>

### → Cognitive Delays

- Children with cognitive delays often experience challenges with executive functioning. This can include skills like attention, memory, planning, problem-solving, and more. Cognitive delays may make it harder to learn a new toileting routine, follow multi-step tasks, recognize body cues, or adapt to changes.<sup>14</sup>

### → Fine and Gross Motor Skill Development

- Toileting involves a range of fine and gross motor skills that can be challenging for children with motor delays. Fine motor skills are small movements using the hands and fingers, while gross motor skills are larger movements using the arms, legs, and core.<sup>14,20</sup>
  - Fine motor tasks include grasping toilet paper, managing clothing, and wiping require hand and finger coordination.
  - Gross motor skills such as sitting, standing, balancing, and core strength.

# Getting Started: Prepare for the Process

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## → 1. Identify Signs of Readiness

Every child develops at their own pace. Often, they will show you signs that they are ready to begin toilet training (Appendix A). These are some signs that your child might be ready to begin toilet training<sup>15</sup>:

- Can stay dry for at least two hours at a time.
- Aware of being wet or soiled (e.g. discomfort, tugging at clothing, aggravation, hiding).
- Shows interest in the bathroom, toilet, or wearing underwear.
- Follows simple directions (e.g., “sit down”, “pull pants up”).
- Sits, stands, and/or walks with or without assistance to the bathroom.

## → 2. Track Toileting Habits

It can be beneficial to observe and record the child’s bathroom patterns for a few days to up to two weeks.<sup>16</sup> This information can help with planning a toileting schedule that matches the child’s natural body rhythms and current routine.

- Note the times of day the child usually urinates or has a bowel movement. This can be after meals, before or after naps, or during certain activities (Appendix B).
- Watch for behavioral cues indicating the need for the bathroom or a clean-up. This may look like squatting, crossing legs, hiding, or running away.<sup>16</sup>

## → 3. Complete an Activity Analysis: Break Down the Task

Activity analysis means breaking down a task into smaller, more manageable steps.<sup>3</sup>

Completing an activity analysis can help identify the physical, cognitive, sensory, emotional, and environmental demands of a task that are delaying a child’s success.<sup>3</sup>

- Complete an activity analysis by observing the child during their toileting routine and noting steps of the process that they need help with.
- Steps of Toileting: Walk to the bathroom, pull down pants, sit on toilet, use bathroom, wipe, flush, pull up pants, wash hands, etc.
- Consider...
  - What steps are the most difficult for the child?
  - What skills are needed for each part?

## → 4. Set Up the Environment

Creating a well-prepared environment is critical for success. Create a bathroom space that has all the necessities and supports the child's needs. Consider having the following<sup>15</sup>:

- **Supplies:** Flushable wipes, extra pairs of underwear, a change of clothes easily accessible, etc.
- **Positioning:** A footstool so the child can sit with their feet flat and feel supported, a child potty seat or toilet cover, backrest or handrails for safety, etc.
- **Comfort Items:** Fidgets, books, a favorite toy, etc.
- **Sensory Supports:** Adjust lighting, reduce noise using headphones, nose plugs for smell, add a cushion if the seat feels cold or uncomfortable.

## → 5. Build a Team Plan

- Collaboration is key. Don't be afraid to talk with others!
- Share toilet training plans with the child's team. This may include teachers, therapists, caregivers, etc. Working as a team can help:
  - Recognize patterns and habits in different environments.
  - Identify helpful tools and strategies.
  - Keep strategies consistent.
  - Identify barriers or challenges across settings.
  - Prepare for adjustments ahead of time.

# Toileting Tools and Strategies

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Every child's journey to toileting independence is different. When families and their team work together, children are more likely to succeed.<sup>17</sup>

## Tools for a Strong Start

Strategies to help make the toilet training process successful from the start (Appendix C).

→ **Create a Toileting Routine:** Create a structured daily routine to help the child become more aware of the need for the bathroom. A predictable routine can be created by observing and documenting toileting habits.<sup>11,15-16</sup>

### Benefits:

- Increases self-awareness of body patterns and habits.
- Builds comfort and consistency around bathroom use.

### Tips/Considerations for Use:

- Use a simple chart or notes to track when your child usually needs to go (Appendix B).
- Start with the most common times (such as after meals or before naps).
- Keep things positive! Make it part of the daily routine, not a chore.
- Use a visual schedule to help make transitions smooth.

→ **Conduct Scheduled Sits:** Have the child sit on the toilet at regular times throughout the day (e.g., after meals, before leaving the house). Start with a goal of at least 6 toilet sits a day, for as little or long as the child will tolerate.<sup>16</sup> This helps the child link bathroom trips with their body's natural patterns and takes away the "guessing" about when to go.<sup>14</sup>

### Benefits:

- Builds consistency and predictability.
- Increases the chance of successful toileting.

### Tips/Considerations for Use:

- Use a timer, potty watch, or phone alarm to alert it is time for a bathroom trip.
- Tell the child when it is time for the bathroom, don't ask. It is not optional!
- Keep sit periods short at first (1–3 minutes), then gradually increase as the child is comfortable.
- Celebrate for sitting on the toilet for any amount of time, even if nothing happens.

→ **Use “Dry Checks”:** Gently check the child’s clothing for accidents at set times across the day to help build awareness. Offer praise for staying dry, even for short periods of time, to help build confidence with staying dry.<sup>14</sup>

**Benefits:**

- Helps connect the feeling of being dry with a positive feeling.
- Provides frequent opportunities for positive reinforcement.
- Reduces skin irritation by decreasing the time a child sits wet.
- May reduce behaviors by keeping a child comfortable.

**Tips/Considerations for Use:**

- Keep checks lighthearted (e.g., “You’re dry! Great job!”)
- Avoid punishing the child when they are wet, instead, use simple and consistent language to explain what has happened (e.g., “Your clothes are wet. Accidents happen sometimes. Let’s go to the bathroom and get cleaned up.”)
- Pair dry checks with a reward system, like a sticker chart or token economy.

→ **Incorporate Visual Supports:** Make toileting predictable by showing the child what to expect through visual supports (Appendix D). A picture chart, “first-then board”, visual schedule, or visual sequence (e.g., pull-down pants, sit, potty, flush, wash hands) can increase understanding and reduce anxiety, leading to more independence.<sup>13,18</sup>

**Benefits:**

- Reduces anxiety by showing what to expect.
- Encourages communication by offering visual tools.

**Tips/Considerations for Use:**

- Place visuals at the child’s eye level near the toilet.
- Keep language simple and consistent.
- Review the steps with the child each time before going to the bathroom.

→ **Video Modeling: Learn by Watching:** Some children learn by watching others complete a task first. Showing a short video of a child or adult completing a bathroom routine can make the steps easier to copy and remember.<sup>11,19</sup>

**Benefits:**

- Provides a clear, consistent example of what to do.
- Can be more engaging than verbal directions alone.

**Tips/Considerations for Use:**

- Watch the video together and talk through each step.
- Choose short, simple clips to avoid overwhelming the child.
- Replay as often as needed before or during toilet practice.
- Be mindful of sensory sensitivities within the video (bright colors, sounds, etc.)

→ **Social Narratives for Support:** Social stories are short, personalized stories that can explain toileting in simple terms. They can help show what is expected and why it's important.<sup>16</sup>

**Benefits:**

- Helps children understand routines and expectations.
- Can reduce fear or uncertainty about new skills.

**Tips/Considerations for Use:**

- Use first person ("I sit on the toilet. I flush. I wash my hands.").
- Use real photos of the child and bathroom when possible.
- Read before toileting or as part of a daily routine.

→ **Encourage Communication:** It is critical to ensure that the child has a way to communicate and express their needs.<sup>15</sup> This may include using words or phrases, gestures or signs, pictures, or a communication device.

**Benefits:**

- Provides a reliable way to communicate, increasing confidence.
- Reduces confusion for caregivers, teachers, and family members.

**Tips/Considerations for Use:**

- Teach a simple word, sign, or symbol for "toilet" early.
- Use consistent language with everyone on the child's team to reduce confusion.
- Reward communication attempts with positive reinforcement and praise.

→ **Wear Underwear:** Have the child wear underwear over their diaper or pull-ups, even if they are not toilet trained. This allows the child to feel the difference between being wet and dry while still containing accidents.<sup>9</sup>

**Benefits:**

- Promotes awareness of accidents.
- Provides a gentle step toward transitioning away from diapers.

**Tips/Considerations for Use:**

- Allow the child to choose fun underwear with favorite characters.
- Start at home when accidents are easier to manage.

- Stay positive! Accidents are a normal part of the learning process!

## Tools to Build on Progress:

Strategies for overcoming challenges once toilet training has started (Appendix C).

→ **Address Sensory Sensitives:** Bathrooms can be overwhelming. Adjust the space by making small changes to help children with sensory sensitivities feel more comfortable and safer when toileting.<sup>11,13</sup>

### Benefits:

- Reduces fear and stress tied to sensory overload.
- Makes the bathroom a safer space.

### Tips/Considerations for Use:

- Use dimmer lighting or warmer bulbs.
- Provide headphones or turn off loud fans.
  - *Tip! Cover the automatic flush sensory on public toilets with a post-it note to avoid unexpected flushes and loud noises while using the bathroom.*
- Offer a cushioned seat or step stool for positioning comfort.

→ **Increase Fluid Intake:** Encourage the child to drink more fluids. This may increase the frequency of bathroom trips, creating more natural toilet training opportunities.<sup>11</sup>

### Benefits:

- Helps the child feel the urge to use the bathroom
- Creates natural opportunities for toilet training
- Supports healthy hydration

### Tips/Considerations for Use:

- Offer small amounts of fluids (water, milk, juice, etc.) throughout the day, rather than large amounts at once.
- Pair fluid intake with trips to the bathroom- help connect the two activities.
- Avoid excessive fluid intake before bed to reduce the likelihood of nighttime accidents.

→ **Prompt Trips to the Bathroom:** Offer gentle and consistent reminders (e.g., "Let's use the potty!") based on the child's needs and toileting schedule to initiate bathroom trips throughout the day.<sup>14</sup>

### Benefits:

- Prevents accidents by keeping toileting top-of-mind.
- Builds awareness of the body's signals over time.

**Tips/Considerations for Use:**

- Keep reminders positive, avoid punishing!
- Pair with visual schedule or "[first-then boards](#)".
- Use fun cues like a potty watch alarm or visual timer.
- Pair reminders with praise for cooperation.

→ **Celebrate Wins:** Positive reinforcements such as praise, high-fives, stickers, or small rewards help a child feel proud of their progress. Over time, rely more on natural reinforcement, like feeling clean and independent.<sup>13</sup>

**Benefits:**

- Encourages motivation and progress.
- Makes toileting a positive, rewarding experience.

**Tips/Considerations for Use:**

- Start with frequent small rewards, then decrease over time.
- Use both physical (stickers charts, [token economies](#)) and social rewards (cheers, or hugs).
- Be consistent. Praise every effort, not just results!

→ **Provide Step-by-Step Guidance:** Some children may need extra support in learning each part of toileting. Try hand-over-hand help, verbal cues, or breaking the task into smaller steps.<sup>11,14</sup>

**Benefits:**

- Makes a big skill feel more manageable.
- Encourages independence over time.

**Tips/Considerations for Use:**

- Focus on one new step at a time (e.g., pulling pants down).
- Try using [visual prompts](#) with physical guidance.
- Celebrate the completion of each step!

# Troubleshooting and Problem Solving

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## → Turn Challenges into Opportunities for Fun!

If the child resists sitting on the toilet, try pairing it with a favorite activity (listening to a song, playing with a toy, etc.). Research shows children are more motivated when preferred rewards are used as part of the process.<sup>12</sup>

## → Dissolve Supports Over Time

As the child progresses, slowly increase the time between potty sits and decrease positive reinforcements. This encourages the child to recognize their own body cues and initiate toileting more independently.<sup>2,13</sup>

## → Flexibility is Key

Every child's timeline is different! If one strategy isn't working, try adjusting sit schedules, new reinforcement systems, or changing sensory supports. Recognizing and responding to the child's needs is the most important part of the process!<sup>2</sup>

# When To Seek More Support

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You don't have to do this alone! If toileting feels overwhelming or unsuccessful, seeking help is a great next step! Professionals can help by providing treatment plans to support toileting challenges. Consider reaching out if these challenges persist over time:

- Accidents that don't improve or lessen.
- Signs of pain or discomfort when toileting (straining, avoiding the toilet because it hurts, etc.).
- Strong resistance or fear of the bathroom.
- Limited progress after several months, even with a structured plans in place.
- The child's delays in communication make it difficult to express needs.
- Interfering behaviors (e.g. biting, hitting, etc.) that make the toileting process unsafe.



## Who Can Help?

Toileting is a team effort. There are different professionals to support every step of the way.<sup>20</sup>

- **Pediatrician or Family Doctor:** To rule out medical concerns like constipation, urinary tract infections, or gastrointestinal issues.
- **Occupational Therapist (OT):** To provide sensory strategies, adaptive equipment (like potty seats or footstools), visual supports, and toileting plans.
- **Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP):** To support communication strategies so your child can express when they need the bathroom.
- **Behavior Specialist or Psychologist:** To help with interfering behaviors such as refusal, fear of the toilet, or resistance to routines.
- **Gastroenterologist (GI Specialist):** For chronic constipation, diarrhea, or other bowel-related concerns that may interfere with toilet training.
- **School or Early Intervention Team:** Teachers, aides, and other support staff can carry over strategies in the classroom to keep routines consistent.



## Always Remember...

- **Be patient!**
  - Toileting is a journey, and positivity makes all the difference!
- **Consistency is Key!**
  - Progress takes time, stick to the plan and don't give up!
- **You are never alone- Support is out there!**
  - Support groups, community resources, etc.
- **Celebrate Wins!**
  - Build your child's confidence by celebrating both big and small victories along the way.

# **"Grab and Go" Resources**

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Appendix A: Checklist–Preparing for the Process

Appendix B: Toileting Tracking Chart

Appendix C: Troubleshooting Toileting Checklist and Poster

Appendix D: Toileting Visual Sequence

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# Checklist-Preparing for the Process

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Use this checklist to prepare for toilet training: confirm readiness signs, track habits, break the task into steps, set up the environment, and align with the child's team.

## 1. Identify Signs of Readiness

- Child stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time.
- Child shows awareness of being wet or soiled (e.g., tugging at clothes, hiding).
- Child shows interest in the bathroom, toilet, or wearing underwear.
- Child can follow simple directions like "sit down" or "pull pants up."
- Child can get to the bathroom and sit on the toilet with or without help.

## 2. Track Toileting Habits

- Observe the child's bathroom patterns for 3–14 days.
- Note times of day they usually go (after meals, naps, etc.).
- Identify behavioral cues (e.g., squatting, crossing legs, hiding)

## 3. Break Down the Task (Activity Analysis)

- Watch the child's current toileting routine.
- Break down toileting into smaller steps.
- Identify steps where the child needs help with (sitting, wiping, managing clothing, etc.)
- Consult with the child's team and brainstorm ways to make each step easier

## 4. Set Up the Environment

- Bathroom is safe and comfortable.
- Gather supplies: wipes, extra clothes, clean underwear, etc.
- Set up positioning supports (child seat, step stool, handrails, or backrest).
- Adjust sensory elements (lights, sounds, smells, etc.).
- Add motivators (fidget toy, favorite book, small reward).

## 5. Grow as A Team

- Share the toileting plan with teachers, caregivers, and therapists.
- Discuss with team members patterns or challenges observed from the child.
- Everyone on the team knows what strategies and routines are being used.
- Discuss a plan for keeping things consistent at home, in the classroom, and the community.

Appendix A

# Toileting Tracking Chart

Note any times the child uses the bathroom to help create a toilet training schedule that supports the child's current routine.

- Identify whether it was urine or a bowel movement.
- Document any behaviors or patterns observed (hiding, pulling at pants, etc.).
- Complete the chart for at least 3 days to understand the child's routines.

Time	#1 (Pee)	#2 (BM)	Observations (behaviors, patterns, etc.):
6:00 am			
7:00 am			
8:00 am			
9:00 am			
10:00 am			
11:00 am			
12:00 pm			
1:00 pm			
2:00 pm			
3:00 pm			
4:00 pm			
5:00 pm			
6:00 pm			
7:00 pm			
8:00 pm			
9:00 pm			
10:00 pm			
11:00 pm			
12:00 am			

Appendix B

# Troubleshooting Toileting Checklist

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Use this guide to help connect common challenges to tools and strategies to support successful toileting.

## What Are the Biggest Challenges You Are Noticing?

- Fear of flushing, covering ears, avoiding the bathroom, strong reaction to lights or smells.**

### Explore Sensory Sensitivities Concerns By:

- Adjust lighting and sounds (turn off fan, sink, etc.)
- Offer headphones or calming music
- Use a padded seat or step stool
- Add comfort items (fidget, toy, book)
- Use visual supports, social stories, or video modeling to prepare
- Pair bathroom time with positive reinforcement

- Frequent accidents, unaware of being wet, doesn't seem to notice bodily cues.**

### Explore Body Awareness Concerns By:

- Use dry checks and praise dryness
- Create scheduled sits after meals or every 1–2 hours
- Track toileting patterns in a log
- Increase fluid intake throughout the day
- Use visuals to connect "feeling" with "going"

- Avoids transitions, interfering behaviors when stopping play (biting, hitting, eloping, etc.), difficulty with changes.**

### Explore Routine Disruption Concerns By:

- Use a visual schedule, chart, or "first-then" board
- Provide countdowns or warnings before bathroom time
- Pair toileting with a consistent cue (song, timer)
- Provide positive reinforcement after successful transitions
- Keep routines consistent across settings.

- Shows signs of pain or discomfort when toileting, consistent straining, constipation, or diarrhea.**

### Explore GI Concerns By:

- Encourage hydration by offering more fluids throughout the day.
- Use scheduled sits after mealtimes.
- Consults with the child's pediatrician or GI specialist.

- Refuses to sit, holds urine/stool, frequent interfering, and avoidance behaviors with toileting.

**Explore Interfering Behaviors Concerns By:**

- Talk with the team (OT, behavioral specialist, etc.) to identify underlying causes.
- Use positive reinforcement (stickers, praise, tokens, etc.).
- Pair toileting with a preferred activity or item.
- Break task down to smaller steps, provide examples.
- Offer choices to give a sense of control.

- Trouble expressing needs, unable to say or signal when they need to use the bathroom.

**Explore Communication Concerns By:**

- Teaching a simple word, sign, or symbol for "toilet".
- Use consistent language.
- Try supports such as picture symbols or AAC devices.
- Post visuals around bathroom at eye level.
- Offer praise for communication attempts.

- Difficulty remembering steps, understanding directions, and is easily distracted.

**Explore Learning Challenges Concerns By:**

- Use visual sequences or cues showing each step.
- Practice one step at a time, not all at once.
- Use video modeling or visual supports to show examples.
- Offer hand-over-hand guidance and verbal cues.

- Experiences challenges with balancing, coordination, and/or manipulating items.

**Explore Fine and Gross Motor Skills Concerns By:**

- Footstools, potty chairs, toilet covers for comfort and positioning.
- Add handrails or grab bars for safety.
- Practice motor tasks (e.g., grasping, reaching, etc.).
- Use adaptive clothing or tools (e.g., Velcro fasteners, elastic waistbands, wipe aide, etc.).

## Always Remember...

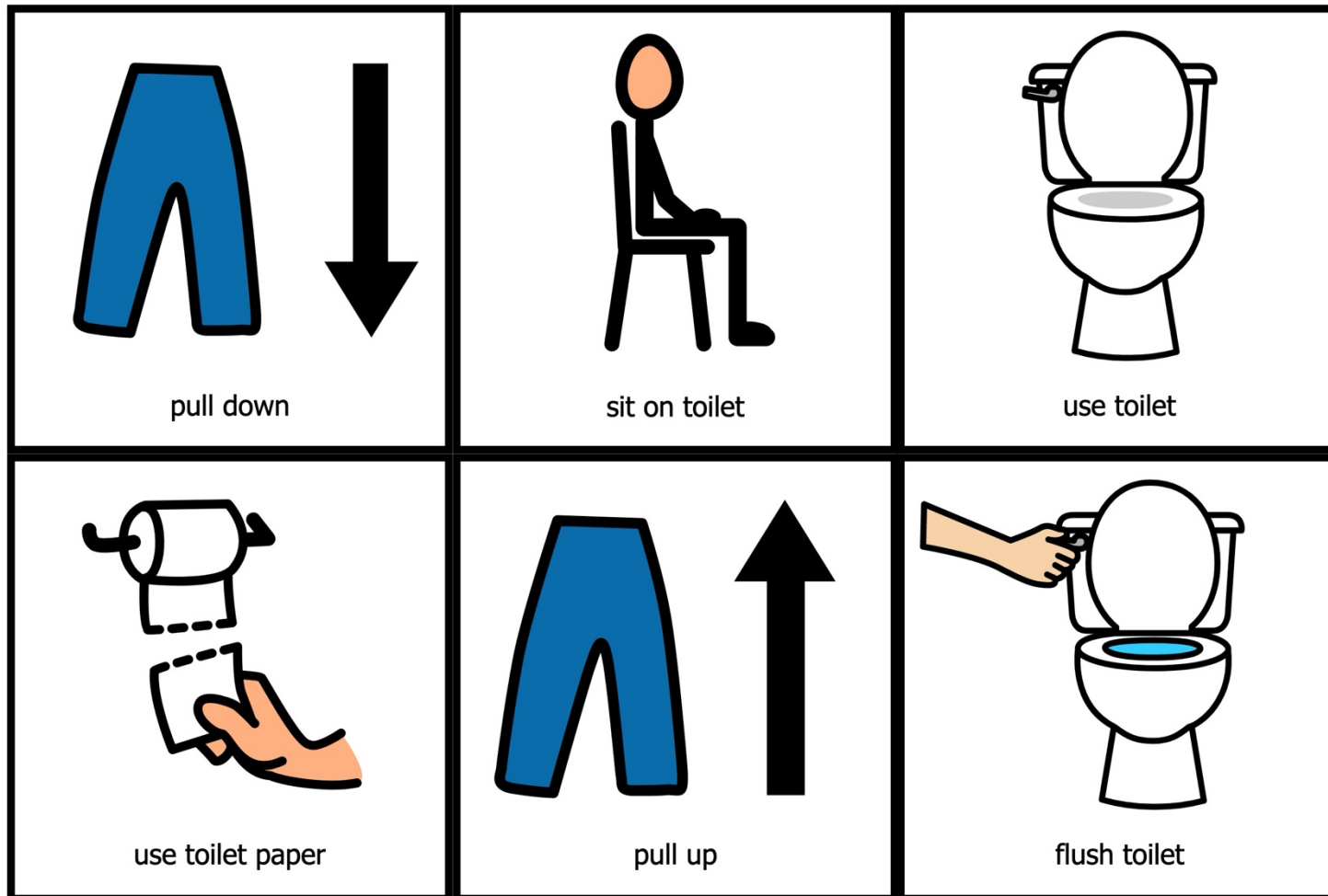
- **Be patient!** Toileting is a journey, and positivity makes all the difference.
- **Consistency is Key!** Progress takes time, stick to the plan and don't give up!
- **You are never alone- Support is out there!** Support groups, community resources, etc.
- **Celebrate Wins!** Build your child's confidence by celebrating big and small victories along the way.

Appendix C

# Toileting Visual Sequence

Place the visual sequence at the child's eye level in the bathroom to support communication, participation, and independence during the toileting process!

\*\*This is an example of a toileting sequence. Depending on the child's needs, adjustments may need to be made to the visual (less/more pictures or words) to support the child effectively. \*\*



# Toileting Troubleshooting

Use this guide to help connect common challenges to tools and strategies to support successful toileting.

## Start: What Are the Biggest Challenges You Are Noticing?

→ **Fear of flushing, covering ears, avoiding the bathroom, strong reaction to lights or smells.**



Explore  
Sensory Sensitivities

- Try:**
- Adjust lighting and sounds (turn off fan, sink, etc.)
  - Offer headphones or calming music
  - Use a padded seat or step stool
  - Add comfort items (fidget, toy, book)
  - Use visual supports, social stories, or video modeling to prepare
  - Pair bathroom time with positive reinforcement

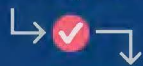
→ **Frequent accidents, unaware of being wet, doesn't seem to notice bodily cues.**



Explore  
Body Awareness

- Try:**
- Use dry checks and praise dryness
  - Create scheduled sits after meals or every 1–2 hours
  - Track toileting patterns in a log
  - Increase fluid intake throughout the day
  - Use visuals to connect “feeling” with “going”

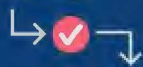
→ **Avoids transitions, interfering behaviors when stopping play (biting, hitting, eloping, etc.), difficulty with changes.**



Explore  
Routine Disruption

- Try:**
- Use a visual schedule, chart, or “first-then” board
  - Provide countdowns or warnings before bathroom time
  - Pair toileting with a consistent cue (song, timer)
  - Provide positive reinforcement after successful transitions
  - Keep routines consistent across settings.

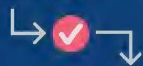
→ **Shows signs of pain or discomfort when toileting, consistent straining, constipation, or diarrhea.**



Explore  
GI Concerns

- Try:**
- Encourage hydration by offering more fluids throughout the day.
  - Use scheduled sits after mealtimes.
  - Consults with the child's pediatrician or GI specialist.

→ **Refuses to sit, holds urine/stool, frequent interfering, and avoidance behaviors with toileting.**



Explore  
Interfering Behaviors

- Try:**
- Talk with the team (OT, behavioral specialist, etc.) to identify underlying causes.
  - Use positive reinforcement (stickers, praise, tokens, etc.).
  - Pair toileting with a preferred activity or item.
  - Break task down to smaller steps, provide examples.
  - Offer choices to give a sense of control.

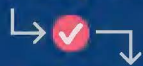
→ **Trouble expressing needs, unable to say or signal when they need to use the bathroom.**



Explore  
Communication

- Try:**
- Teaching a simple word, sign, or symbol for “toilet”.
  - Use consistent language.
  - Try supports such as picture symbols or AAC devices.
  - Post visuals around bathroom at eye level.
  - Offer praise for communication attempts.

→ **Difficulty remembering steps, understanding directions, and is easily distracted.**



Explore  
Learning Challenges

- Try:**
- Use visual sequences or cues showing each step.
  - Practice one step at a time, not all at once.
  - Use video modeling or visual supports to show examples.
  - Offer hand-over-hand guidance and verbal cues.

→ **Experiences challenges with balancing, coordination, and/or manipulating items.**



Explore  
Fine & Gross Motor Skills

- Try:**
- Footstools, potty chairs, toilet covers for comfort and positioning.
  - Add handrails or grab bars for safety.
  - Practice motor tasks (e.g., grasping, reaching, etc.).
  - Use adaptive clothing or tools (e.g., Velcro fasteners, elastic waistbands, wipe aide, etc.).