

The Skills-Based Potty Training Approach

**Potty Training Tips To Match Your Child's
Temperament And Stage Of Development**

by

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Pull-Up Cloth Diapers

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Introduction

Potty Training Defined

Potty training is the process of teaching your child to eliminate in a toilet every time, eventually without reminders or assistance. Most sources seem to define potty training around the elements of regular potty sits and allowed accidents. While these are useful tools, they are useful only with some children at some ages and stages of development and for learning some of the skills required for full potty independence. This is why there is always a section detailing signs of potty training readiness which usually includes developmental milestones that are not typically reached until well after a child's second birthday.

So what if you would like to have your child out of diapers before age two? You are up against conventional wisdom, to be sure, but you are not actually out there on your own. Many parents have success teaching their young toddlers and even infants to eliminate in the potty instead of in diapers. Does that mean that potty training is easy? No, not necessarily. Some children are very easily potty trained because of their own dispositions and motivations. Some children actively resist potty training due to theirs. I also do not mean to imply that you should expect your child to be fully potty independent much before age three. However, if you recognize that you and your child are working on skills that may well require patience and time to conquer, I hope that you can see the mastery of each skill as the achievement that it truly is for your child.

This document is aimed at giving you an up-front understanding of each potty skill and the potty training elements best suited to help you teach those skills to your child on your own timeline and in the order that makes sense for your family. My underlying goal is to help you free yourself from changing wet and poopy diapers, and your child from being in them, well ahead of the revised standard age of three and a half and with as little disruption and stress as possible for your child and your family.

Establishing realistic expectations

If your child is just turning one, you have a much different road ahead than if your child has already turned two. If your child is resilient and bounces back quickly from

disappointments, you have a different set of guidelines to follow than if your child hates setbacks. If your child has already mastered some of the potty skills, your process may be much smoother than if you are starting from scratch. Please explore the skills section and mark off any that your child has already mastered.

Because the mental side of potty training is usually well over half the battle, I have organized this document with a beginning chapter called Child Factors To Consider When Organizing Your Potty Training Approach. These factors will help you understand what pitfalls you may need to avoid, and to make an intelligent, realistic decision about whether now is the time to potty train your child. This chapter is not abstract. If you find that the signs are steering you away from potty training, but you have a very real need to potty train right now, then at least you will be better prepared and have more realistic expectations about what potty training will be like for both your child and for you.

Likewise, the second chapter, Parent Factors To Consider When Organizing Your Potty Training Approach, will help set your expectations around your own likely experience with potty training your child relative to the child factors listed in the first chapter. If you can be very honest with yourself about areas of potential difficulty or stress, you can find creative ways to make things easier for yourself, whether that means waiting six months before starting to potty train, or if it means calling in a grandma or two.

Caveats

I am not a medical professional, and I do not try to make medical diagnoses nor claims within this document. I am a mother, I have gone through many stages of potty training with my own daughter, and conducted research to gain a greater understanding of potty training across other people's experiences as well. My suggestion to the reader, however, is to pay close attention to any gut feelings that tell you that your child falls outside of a normal range, and to decide for yourself if that difference should be reported to your child's doctor.

Using this guide

My suggestion is that you read through the entire document before taking action if you have not yet started potty training your child. If you have started potty training and

what you are doing seems to be going smoothly, carry on with your present plan and make any modifications after you finish reading this document. If you have made potty training attempts with your child but things have not gone well, then read fast! Maybe you will discover some key reasons for the poor reception or lack of results that will help you make decisions about where to go from here.

There is a second document available for download that provides a one-page checklist to note your situation on as you read each section of the e-book. I suggest that you print that page right now and keep it handy to work through as you read so you won't have to search through again later to find explanations.

Skill-Based Potty Training and Antsy Pants™

Through the course of this document I have included commentary about how the reusable diaper/trainers that I designed and sell, Antsy Pants™ Pull-Up Cloth Diapers, can be used to support your potty training efforts. Please understand that I do not require the use or purchase of Antsy Pants™ in order to receive this e-book, although I do include it free with the purchase of some Antsy Pants™ diaper packages.

If you purchased this e-book and then decide to order a package of six or 12 diapers to help your child through potty training, forward your confirmation email to us at CustomerService@GetAntsy.com and we will issue you a coupon for the full e-book purchase price. If you want to purchase the diapers first, send the e-book purchase confirmation email and include your shopper ID from the Antsy Pants™ order confirmation email. We will issue you a refund for the price paid for the e-book.

Chapter 1: Child Factors To Consider When Organizing Your Potty Training Approach

Your Child's Willingness To Please

Compliant

If you are lucky enough to have a compliant child you probably already know just how lucky you are. Compliancy, defined for our purposes as the willingness to do as asked or encouraged by the parent or caregiver, is dictated more by your child's stage of development than anything. If your child is under about 15 months of age then you may not have experienced the stubbornness that can make even the simplest task, like putting on your child's shoes or coat, into an endurance event.

Every child is different, and compliancy is also somewhat of a relative thing depending on your child's underlying personality. Generally, though, if you can convince your child without difficulty that it is bedtime, naptime, dinner time, etc. then you will also be able to add potty elements like potty sits into your routine.

Potty Training Your Compliant Child

It is certainly less complicated to start the intense period of potty training during a developmental stage where your child is a happy participant rather than an unyielding obstacle. If your child is agreeable and you have the mind space, then you can launch into potty sits, potty timing and regular potty trips from the start. Using praise and positive reinforcement will keep your child coming back for more.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Since a compliant child is happy to have your attention and very receptive to praise and little rewards, making a change to Antsy Pants™ just as your child is beginning her exciting learning adventure acts as positive reinforcement. Antsy Pants™ are colorful, comfortable and go on easily without making your busy toddler lie down for a diaper change. They also do not look like baby diapers, and toddlers like wearing them.

Stubborn

Has your child already discovered that she has her own will and seems to be choosing to exercise it non-stop? If even simple tasks are sometimes enough to make you put off outings and you are ready to scream just getting your child into bed on time then you are probably going through one of the stages of development where your child is just going to be stubborn for a while. Most toddlers pass through a phase of this type somewhere between 15 months and their second birthday, then another sometime after age two and a half.

Potty Training Your Stubborn Child

If your child is going through a stubborn streak, it isn't necessary to delay teaching potty skills. Certainly, if your child is old enough to have hit the first rough patch of proclaiming, "No," and throwing tantrums, then she is also old enough to be capable of accomplishing the more essential potty skills.

For starters, there are parenting techniques that can help convince your child that the thing you want her to do is the same as what she wants to do. If you are patient and can be very consistent about making your child's potty training experience fun and rewarding instead of stressful, then you can likely proceed undaunted.

If you aren't blessed with that particular patience gene or you don't have the ability to be fully present and consistent right now, then my suggestions are only two:

1. Limit potty trips to occasional trips, perhaps daily before bath or as part of the pre-bedtime routine.
2. Let your child work on learning her body's elimination cues (skill 3, Identifying The Need To Eliminate) first since this doesn't require compliancy.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

If your child is resistant to sitting on the potty, most potty training guides will tell you to back off and try again in a month or two. The good news is that Antsy Pants™ let you do that and continue teaching your child a valuable potty skill at the same time. How is that possible? By giving your child immediate wetness feedback, Antsy Pants™ can help your child learn a very important potty skill, Identifying The Need To Eliminate (skill 3) without any coercion on your part. When you choose to start other elements of potty training, that head start on identifying the need to eliminate will help your little one grasp other potty skills much more quickly, meaning she may take less time overall to reach mastery of self-initiated potty trips and maybe even full potty independence. All of this while cutting the recurring expense of disposable diapers or training pants out of your budget for good.

Your Child's Attitude Toward Cleanliness

Messophobe

Does your child freak out if his hands get dirty, tear at his diaper the moment he pees or poops and insist that you change him? You may find potty training short and sweet.

Your child is clearly motivated to find a better way to stay clean than making messes in a diaper.

Babies who have been in cloth diapers from birth seem more likely to develop the messophobe outlook earlier than those who are raised in disposables, especially if the diapers you used did not have a stay-dry lining and the child has not been truly comfortable in the diapers.

Potty Training Your Messophobe

Regardless of whether your child is 18 months or three years, though, if your child is a messophobe, you may want to skip the relaxed potty sits and head straight for hourly trips to the potty. For an older child, a few days in underwear without making a big deal out of accidents may be all the training he needs. Be aware, though, that for a younger

or sensitive child the feeling of pee rushing down his legs can cause potty training to take far longer than it would have otherwise. Causing accidents can be very stressful to your child.

How do Antsy Pants™ fit into your potty training regime?

For a younger child or one who is not yet aware of his elimination needs, you will save yourself major aggravation by using Antsy Pants™ in combination with regular trips to the potty. At the very least, you should have fewer headaches with your child no longer able to rip his diaper off. If you feel your child is old enough to handle the additional stress of accidents and you want to skip ahead to underwear or bare-bottomed training, then Antsy Pants™ can join in as the backup plan for outings, night time and, if needed, nap time.

Dirtophile

On the opposite end of the spectrum, if your child runs away from diaper changes even though the diaper is so full it is drooping and seems perfectly happy to sit in his or her own poop, you may be in for a long slog. Your child doesn't have the built-in motivation for potty training of the messophobe, and really couldn't care less whether or not he is in a diaper, or whether he is clean or not.

Potty Training Your Dirtophile

That your child is a dirtophile doesn't per se mean that you won't be able to make headway on potty training, but in combination with other negative factors, you may decide that potty training right now is more hassle than it's worth.

How do Antsy Pants™ fit into your potty training regime?

Enjoy the ease of changing diapers with Antsy Pants™ and remember that you don't have to buy any more disposables for this kid, at least.

Your Child's Awareness Of Eliminating Clued-In

If your child already communicates to you when he has just peed or pooped, it is going to speed up the potty training process for you. If he can let you know before he fills that diaper, then he already has one of the hardest parts of potty training figured out.

Potty Training Your Elimination-Aware Child

Being aware of his elimination gives you a big step forward down the road to potty training, but it doesn't guarantee quick success. If your child is a dirtophile and stubborn then being clued in will triumph only to the extent that you succeed in overcoming those potential potty training deal-busters. You know your child best and will need to determine how and when to undertake potty training.

If your child is able to tell as soon as he wets, ask him to help you by telling you as soon as he goes. Since the end state of potty training requires acting on every single elimination need, and your child is already able to determine those, even if only after the fact, the best way to gain traction is to start acting on every elimination right now. You can use potty timing to try to catch elimination before it ends up in the diaper, or you can develop the association of the elimination with a trip to the potty, even if there is nothing left to put in the potty. One key point, though, is not to treat elimination in the diaper as an accident at this point.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

If your child is able to tell you when she has just wet or when she is about to, you will probably want to run her to the potty each time she says it is time. Depending how often she does this and at what point in the process she does so, you may find that Antsy Pants™ are staying clean for long stretches. That is great and great positive reinforcement not only for your child, but frankly, for you as well. Because Antsy Pants™ are so easy to pull on and off, you may find that you can make it to the potty more quickly than you would with a diaper, and if the liner still feels dry then there is no real need to change once the potty sit is complete.

You should also be able to use Antsy Pants™ at night until your child is dry through the night as well, which often takes an additional six months or more after daytime dryness has been achieved. Once you figure out what configuration of inserts you need to handle your child's nighttime wetting, you are all set.

Blissfully Ignorant

If your child doesn't have a clue when he needs to go, has already gone, or is in the process of going, then you've got some work ahead of you. Right now he isn't able to read his body's elimination cues.

Potty Training Your Blissfully Ignorant Child

Blissful ignorance isn't an insurmountable problem. You can even achieve daytime dryness, an accomplishment commonly equated with being potty trained, without your child becoming "clued in". Until your child becomes aware of his elimination needs, though, making it to the potty on time will always depend on your ability to maintain control of the schedule for regular potty trips. Your child will not be fully potty independent until he can determine by himself when it is time to go potty.

Beginning potty training with a child who is blissfully ignorant but otherwise happy to participate in the process should progress easily. You can start by using potty sits to teach the potty, hygiene and ancillary skills first, then graduate to regular potty trips to teach holding and releasing potty skills, leaving the awareness aspect until last. This is a very common method of potty training when beginning with children under age two.

If your child has other negative factors that are predicting a rough ride with potty training, then think of this one factor as independent of the others. If you want to hold off on potty trips because your child just isn't interested right now, you can still make progress on a major potty skill by incorporating consistent wetness feedback into your plan right now.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Antsy Pants™ are a great learning tool to help your child make the connection between his body's elimination cues and wetting, whether or not you choose to start a formal potty training regimen right now. Have a toddler who is interested in learning to use the potty? Great. Use Antsy Pants™ to keep inevitable accidents from being stressful messes that lead to potty training setbacks. Your toddler isn't ready to start potty training just yet? No problem. He can learn a valuable potty skill from Antsy Pants™ wetting feedback.

Your Child's Attitude Toward Pooping

Relaxed

If bowel movements do not upset your child, this portion of your potty training experience will be much easier. Some children may be upset by the feeling of the need to defecate and the sensation caused by the actual act of elimination. This does not refer to reaction to the poop after elimination (see Messophobia for more on that).

Potty Training Your Poop-Relaxed Child

Not much to think about here. Your child isn't upset by poop, so you don't have to worry about reacting negatively to your child's BMs. Whenever you notice your child's "poop tells" (grimaces, squatting, grunting, etc), remind him that poop goes in the potty and rush him to the potty immediately. In my experience, you will need to pick the child up in order to get him to the potty, but depending on your child, you may be able to stall his BM just by making him think about it directly. Once you get to the potty, remove whatever clothing is necessary for him to sit on the potty and have him sit, even if he clearly has already finished his BM. Wait a few minutes before letting him get down from the potty, and during this time explain that poop goes in the potty and that next time he can try to let you know before the poop comes so he can get to the potty in time. Once he has completed his BM in the potty or the wait time is over to make sure he had already finished before reaching the potty, help him wipe and get down, then show him

how poop goes in the potty by putting any feces from his diaper or underwear in the toilet to flush down. By following this routine every time your child poops you are teaching him that poop goes in the potty, not in your pants. Eventually, that lesson will sink in.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Antsy Pants™ are easy to pull off and on, so getting your child to the potty before the pooping happens may be easier than with some standard diapering options. Their design also does a great job of keeping poop contained inside the diaper while you are in transit to the bathroom. And snap openings at both sides allow you to remove Antsy Pants™ without pulling big messes down your child's legs and over his feet, so those messes are better controlled and easier to clean up. The material of the wicking liner doesn't readily accept stains, so your Antsy Pants™ will look good even if your child takes awhile catching on to the poop-goes-in-the-potty idea.

Concerned

Does your child run and hide when he needs to poop? Or maybe hunker down with a frightened look on his face? If your child is concerned about poop, I tend to think he makes it obvious to everyone around him. There are several causes for your child's concern, and they can seem like a very big deal to your child. Maybe he doesn't like the way pooping takes over control of his body, or he could be concerned that part of him is coming out and will be lost. If your child is constipated, it could also be physical discomfort that is causing him distress.

Potty Training Your Poop-Concerned Child

To the extent possible, try to determine a probable cause for your child's source of concern. If you suspect constipation is causing physical discomfort, try adding fruits containing pectin to your child's diet, like pear and apple. Try to limit foods that can aggravate constipation, such as bananas.

If the cause seems more fear-based than discomfort, talk to your child often (not while he is upset about pooping) about how poop is a part of everyone's life, people, animals, and birds. It doesn't just happen to him. When he has a BM, clap and cheer and give him big hugs or high fives; celebrate the poop. And that is regardless of where the poop has landed, in the potty or in his underwear. Neither stops the celebration. Why is poop in your child's pants a reason to party? Because your child needs to see that the arrival of poop is not in any way cause for concern, but a reason to celebrate.

Your child still needs to learn that poop goes in the potty, not in his pants, but you have to handle this part in a positive way. If you pick your child up to rush him to the potty to catch the poop as it arrives, make sure your facial expressions and tone are happy and excited; "Poo poo is coming, bunny! Let's go put that poo poo in the potty where it belongs! Yay, poo poo!"

If the poop ends up in the pants, brush it off and tell your child he can try to put his poop in the potty next time. Show him that poop goes in the potty by putting it there, and help your child flush the poop down the toilet, clapping or waving and saying, "Bye bye, poo poo!"

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

No difference here between children who are relaxed and those who are concerned. Antsy Pants™ are easy to pull off and on, so getting your child to the potty before the pooping happens may be easier than with some standard diapering options. Their design also does a great job of keeping poop contained inside the diaper while you are in transit to the bathroom and snap openings at both sides allow you to remove Antsy Pants™ without pulling big messes down your child's legs and over his feet, so those messes are better controlled and easier to clean up. The material of the wicking liner doesn't readily accept stains, so your Antsy Pants™ will look good even if your child takes awhile catching on to the poop-goes-in-the-potty idea.

Chapter 2: Parent Factors To Consider When Organizing Your Potty Training Approach

Tolerance Of Body Waste Messes

It's only pee and poop!

Do you have solid surface flooring throughout the house or are you planning on recarpeting after potty training anyway? Or are you a nurse and have cleaned up far, far worse things? If you can truly say, "Its only pee and poop," then you are body waste mess-tolerant.

Potty Training If You Are Mess-Tolerant

Because you don't let life's messes stop you, you have a number of options open to you for diapering (or not) while potty training. You should, however, pay attention to your child's factors as you narrow those options. If your child is under two I would recommend choosing a highly leak-resistant diapering option so you don't cause your child stress that could lead to potty training delays.

If your child will be potty training while in an out-of-home child care setting as well, be sure to check with them as well, since most if not all states have regulations regarding the containment of body waste in licensed daycare facilities.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Unless you are committing to a potty training method that relies on allowed accidents for a child who has already turned two, Antsy Pants™ can work for you. And if you have selected a potty training method that advocates allowed accidents but your child has not yet reached his second birthday, you can modify your approach to include wetting feedback with Antsy Pants™ instead of allowed accidents to limit your child's stress. In any case, if you are looking for a solution that can limit your child's stress and also encourage potty learning, Antsy Pants™ are a great choice. They can also be used for night wetting once your child is staying dry through the day.

Oh, no, not on the carpet!

Hate the very thought of pee touching your carpets and furniture? Would you be embarrassed beyond belief if your child had an accident in a store, restaurant or at a friend's house? You are body waste mess intolerant. That's nothing to be ashamed of, by the way. I'm guessing you may be quite motivated to put the whole diapering era behind you, but not if it means your house smells like a kennel and yours is the lap getting peed in.

Potty Training If You Are Mess-Intolerant

Please do something nice for yourself and don't suddenly replace diapers with all-cotton training pants or, heaven forbid, character underwear. You aren't going to make potty training pleasant for your child by stressing yourself out over accidents.

Whether you choose to potty train your child in disposable pull-ups or leak-proof reusable training pants is up to you. Be sure before you decide that the option you go with has enough absorbency to fully contain your child's potty misses for the time span you require.

This is equally important if your child will be potty training while in an out-of-home childcare setting as well. Most if not all states have regulations regarding the containment of body waste.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Antsy Pants™ are designed to keep pee and poop contained inside the diaper. They are also easy to remove generally solid toddler poop from, and don't require much handling when dirty to put in the wash. Any daycare that does not specifically refuse cloth diapers should be quite willing to use Antsy Pants™ in the daycare setting, as they are convenient to use and leak-resistant, just like their disposable counterparts.

Capacity For Consistency

The Scheduler

If you already keep your child on a fairly structured schedule regarding other activities, naptime, mealtimes, etc., then I will assume you can also offer consistency around potty training activities.

Potty Training If You Can Be Consistent

For you, beginning potty training could be as easy as implementing a predictable schedule of trips to the potty that you can tailor as you go along depending on the results you are seeing. If your child is willing to make a trip to the potty every half hour, hour or whatever interval works for keeping him dry through the day, then this can absolutely be an effective method of teaching.

Young toddlers can do very well with these consistent potty visits. This is because they are usually very willing to play along with whatever you suggest, in this case the trip to the potty. They also respond very positively to their parents' praise and like to see you happy with them.

Because you are the driving force behind the potty trips, be aware that your child may well achieve full daytime dryness without actually learning the connection between her body's elimination cues and the action of eliminating. This is not a problem, but your child does need to learn the skill of recognizing the need to eliminate before she will be able to tell you herself that it is time to make a trip to the potty.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Antsy Pants™ are so easy to put on and take off over the feet of your standing child. . Your child will like their vibrant colors and how comfortable they are, and will be proud of wearing big kid pants.

Any accidental pees between trips to the potty can provide a reminder to your child by giving wetting feedback.

Overall, you would use Antsy Pants™ full-time while your child is getting the hang of putting pee in the potty, then just for outings, naps and nighttime, then as your child is able to hold elimination for longer times you can replace Antsy Pants™ with underwear for more and more of the time. Since most children do not stay dry through the night until at least age three, your Antsy Pants™ will most likely still see action after daytime potty training is completed.

Seat-Of-The-Pants

If you have a hard time keeping a consistent bedtime, naptime, and mealtimes for your child, it may be very difficult for you to commit to being consistent with potty training for the amount of time it will take for your child to learn potty independence.

Potty Training If You Can't Be Consistent

Don't worry; you don't necessarily have to be a scheduler to get through potty training. You do have to organize your approach, though. Think about having your child concentrate first on potty skills that will increase her ability to be responsible for telling you when it is time for a potty trip instead of the other way around.

Look for help keeping a potty schedule:

- Start small, with a pre-bath potty sit, and add on trips to the potty that are anchored around things you do have a schedule for: upon waking, before naptime, as part of the bedtime routine. Don't set daytime dryness as your goal

until your child is taking advantage of most, if not all, of the opportunities you are presenting.

- Ask your mom, sister, best friend or daycare for help. I know our daycare was instrumental for our family in this particular area. One of my good friends saw huge advances in her son's potty skills after her mom started a potty schedule for him.
- Use an alarm to keep you both on a potty schedule. This can be a useful tool in convincing toddlers to do things your way anyway, since the alarm is objective and you as caregiver can blame the activity on the timer. "Oh, there's the potty alarm. Time to go potty!"
- Focus on the potty skill that will let your child tell you when its potty time (Skill 3: Identifying The Need To Eliminate).

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Whether you decide to potty train now or later, Antsy Pants™ can help. Their true wetness feedback helps turn potty misses into learning experiences, so your child can start to develop the ability to feel when it's time to go even if you aren't making trips to the potty.

Antsy Pants™ soft-stretch side panels also make potty trips and toddler diaper changes while standing easier.

Patience Of A Saint

I envy your unlimited patience with your toddler. You can take time out from whatever you are doing and truly concentrate on your child's needs without feeling a rise in your blood pressure. You don't have to call in reinforcements when plan A and plan B go awry.

Potty Training If You Have Patience

Because you are content to take things as they come without becoming a ticking time bomb, you can proceed with potty training even if your child's factors are less than ideal. For instance, you probably have a pretty good handle on getting your child to do things your way even though he is stubborn. Likewise, you are able to keep your emotions in check through whatever spate of undesirable behavior crops up.

You may find that because you are able to work patiently with your child, he may take much more readily to potty training than you are expecting.

Read through the sections on potty skills and elements, and choose your approach to potty training based on the needs of your family and your child, as well as what fits best with your own personality.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Antsy Pants™ can back you up with almost any approach you choose for potty training. You can find specifics as you read through the next sections. If all the stars are aligned and it looks like now is a good time to start potty training, you should feel confident about giving your child the learning opportunities he needs to learn each potty skill at his own pace. Hopefully the information in this e-book will help you along the way as new situations arise.

Not So Much

If you find it difficult to take a walk with your toddler without wanting him to hurry, you may be impatient. If it drives you bonkers when your child wants to visit the restroom in the restaurant four times in an hour, you're not patient. Start to steam when your child refuses to climb in the car seat and sit down? You guessed it: not patient.

I'm not saying you can't pretend to be patient, or that you aren't sometimes or even often patient. But if you recognize that even when you do a good job of not showing your child your impatience it still takes quite a toll on you mentally, then pretend there isn't a stigma to being called impatient and read on.

Potty Training If You Have No Patience

May I suggest that you take a serious look at your child's current factors and make sure that your child is motivated or at least willing to learn before you subject yourself to the torture of potty training a reluctant or refusing child?

Unless you have an amazing support system full of loving people who do have patience or a strong motivation to see your child potty trained, waiting until you see signs that your child has shifted to a more favorable set of predictive factors is a wise course of action.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

While Antsy Pants™ can't help you with the four trips to the bathroom during dinner out (except that they really are pretty easy to get off and on, and even Daddy can handle it), they can be a great tool to help your child learn an important potty skill while you wait for signs that he will be more open to potty training. Who knows? Maybe the fun bright colors and soft comfortable fabrics will get your child interested in potty training too.

Chapter 3: The 11 Potty Skills

Introduction To Potty Skills

The eleven skills required for full potty independence are grouped first by their function and then presented in the approximate order in which a child of normal development could master them, with the necessary assistance and guidance of her caregivers. This does not mean that a child should be expected to have mastered these skills at the stated age. Many children are not introduced to the elimination skills until they are much older, and babies often vary the order in which they develop gross motor skills, fine motor skills and communication skills.

The three categories of skills are elimination skills, potty and hygiene skills and ancillary skills. Elimination skills are those your child must have in order to stay dry at all times, barring any accidents caused by lack of reasonable access to a toilet. Potty and hygiene skills are those involved in using the potty and addressing health concerns. If the child does not have these skills, the parent must assist the child. Ancillary skills are additional parts of the process that the child can be taught as her physical abilities increase until such time as she is fully potty independent.

Your child does not need to have all of the skills in place in order to begin potty training. Your child doesn't even need all of the skills to be considered potty trained. A child who is taken for regular potty trips throughout the day without grasping skills 1, 3 and 4 will have accidents any time her caregivers miss giving a potty opportunity at the needed interval, but could still be in underwear throughout the day, having mastered skill 2. On the other hand, a cloth-diapered child who has already mastered skill 3 can easily be taught skill 4 and will gradually increase the strength and control of muscles required for mastery of skills 1 and 2, making it potentially far easier to complete potty training to the child-led potty trips stage, even if she still lacks a few skills required for full potty independence.

Elimination Skills

Skill 1: Holding Elimination At Will

As proponents of elimination communication (EC) or infant potty training will tell you, even very small babies are capable of holding their pee and poop. Most infants can acquire the skill if they are conditioned to do so through the use of regular potty opportunities and cueing. Babies who are instead conditioned to eliminate in diapers will generally not have this skill, which relates to muscle strength.

Many medical resources state that children are not physically capable of controlling the muscles that hold back their elimination until around age two. When you consider that many cultures around the world routinely complete potty training by 12 months, this is obviously untrue. What may be more accurate, though to my knowledge not scientifically documented, is that learning to hold back elimination is difficult for children without the ability to know when they need to go, as is often the case for children who have worn disposable diapers since birth. Because of this, the muscles that control elimination go undeveloped.

Skill 2: Eliminating On Cue

This skill is also noted by ECers as being able to occur even in very small infants as young as a few weeks of age. By conditioning a baby to associate peeing and pooping with verbal and/or auditory cues and anticipating their elimination needs based on close observation of the baby's own patterns, the infant's caregivers can then shift to a proactive method of offering potty opportunities when the baby is likely to need to eliminate, using the assigned cues to trigger the baby to eliminate.

Once muscle strength is developed allowing the child to hold elimination at will (skill 1), the child can be trained to control the release of the muscles as well.

Skill 3: Identifying The Need To Eliminate

Based on anecdotal evidence that I have collected, it seems clear that by directing their attention to their bodies' elimination cues from an early age, babies can complete this

facet of potty training by around their first birthday. Certainly, ECed babies and those who wear cloth diapers tend to acquire the skill of identifying the need to eliminate far earlier than those in disposable diapers.

The prerequisite for identifying the need to eliminate is the association of eliminating with the body's pre-elimination signals that directly precede the action.

A child at almost any age and any stage of potty training can benefit from an appropriate focus on this skill. By the same token, there are many children for whom some forms of focus will cause lengthy potty training setbacks. Using allowed accidents to reinforce your child's learning is powerful, but you must proceed with caution, since it is very capable of causing harmful stress very quickly for young or sensitive children.

Skill 4: Communicating The Need To Eliminate

The prerequisite for skill 4, communicating the need to eliminate, is skill 3, identifying the need to eliminate. If we accept that skill 3 is generally not achievable until approximately 12 months, then the actual communication skills should be teachable at the same age. Proponents of infant sign language have absolutely demonstrated that simple signs can be picked up as early as ten months by many if not all babies. The sign for potty is particularly easy to teach and we used it successfully in our house from 18 months. I have seen numerous reports by parents practicing infant potty training of their ECed infants signing the need to use the potty far earlier than that. If your child is already verbal you may be able to skip signing in favor of saying potty. Our daughter transitioned to saying, "Potty, Mommy," at around 21 months. Some more verbally precocious children will be able to pick up the words closer to 15 months of age.

Skill 5: Remaining Dry Through The Night

While mastery of skill 5 is completely independent of daytime potty training, it usually occurs after daytime training is complete.

There are complex physiological reasons why children often have difficulty achieving mastery of this skill, and while I have not yet found scientific studies to confirm the

statistic, preliminary research seems to indicate that around 40 percent of three-year old children are not yet dry through the night.

Different families find different solutions for keeping things dry while waiting for the bladder to mature to the point where night dryness is achieved. Some parents take the child to the potty just before bedtime and then before they themselves go to bed. Others use cloth or disposable diapers as a backup at night.

Potty And Hygiene Skills

Skill 6: Sitting On The Potty

Babies can typically sit on a potty with assistance as soon as they can hold their heads up by themselves. Generally it is possible to hold a baby in a seated position on a small potty by three or four months of age.

Babies can usually sit without assistance by around six months of age at around the same time they can sit upright on the floor without toppling to one side.

By 18 months or so your child may be big enough to graduate to the big potty, i.e., the standard-sized toilet in your bathroom. If properly equipped with a sturdy step stool that has a secure handrail, your child may soon learn to access the toilet without your assistance, though she may initially need a potty seat to feel comfortable on the big seat.

There is no correct answer as to whether you should use a potty chair or a potty seat on a standard toilet. I suspect most younger children feel more secure on the smaller potty chair, especially if it is sized so that they can put their feet flat on the ground while sitting on the potty.

Skill 7: Wiping After Going Potty

Clearly this one is dependant upon both gender and whether for pee or poop. It is extremely important to be sure your little girl can pat delicately from front to back before you allow her to wipe without your assistance. Boys are easy for pee but will still

have difficulty wiping after poop. Somewhere around age two and a half or three years your child should be able to master wiping for either form of elimination.

Skill 8: Washing Hands

As part of the process of going potty, your child will need to wash her hands. At very young ages she will need your assistance to reach the sink, get soap, rub hands together to form bubbles, rinse, turn off the water and dry hands. As you progress through potty training your child will be able to learn to do more and more of the steps herself. With a sturdy stool to access the sink, your child could be able to manage the whole operation by about two and a half years of age.

Ancillary Skills

Skill 9: Gaining Unassisted Access To The Potty

This skill relates primarily to mobility but also, in some cases, to size. It is complicated by the vastly different potty equipment options available on the market. At 12 months it is entirely possible that your child might be capable of getting herself onto a small potty chair to go potty, while a larger potty chair might be difficult for her to manage even at 18 months. Remember that unassisted access to the potty is not necessary for potty training, only for total potty independence, which also requires several more complicated skills that will likely take months longer for your child to develop. What this means is that if a potty seat works better for your family and you have to lift your child up, don't worry about it. You don't have to select a potty that your child can get on and off of by herself unless it seems to be important to your child for some reason.

Skill 10: Emptying And Cleaning The Bowl of a Potty Chair

Your child's age acquiring this skill will depend on her dexterity, gross motor skills and ability to access the sink. Most parents would not expect a child younger than perhaps two and a half to complete all of the steps unassisted.

Again, this skill is required only for potty independence. It is not necessary in order to consider your child potty trained.

Skill 11: Removing And Replacing Own Clothing

The mastery of this skill is dependent not only on your child's fine motor skills and balance but also on the type of clothing she is dressed in. My daughter is just now able to remove her own pants and underwear at age two and a half and she doesn't yet know how to get them back on. If it is important to you that your child be potty independent at two and a half, you would likely select items of clothing that your child is fully capable of dealing with based on her current skills. Leg warmers paired with a shirt could be a legitimate option if that is the case.

Chapter 4: The 7 Elements Of Potty Training

Introduction to the elements

The goal of potty training is to teach your child to eliminate in a potty consistently. To achieve that goal fully, there are ten distinct skills that must be mastered. So how do you teach your child these skills? Through the use of some or all of the following nine elements of potty training.

As you would probably expect, many of these elements involve incorporating the routine of going to the potty into your child's life.

What you might not know is which elements are actually useful at which ages and for children with what specific dispositions. I've also tried to reference the skills that can be taught with each element to help you put together an action plan that will work to advance the skills you and your child are ready for.

If you haven't yet read the sections on factors to consider and potty skills, you will want to do so before moving on to the elements of potty training.

Potty Sits

For very young toddlers this is a common way to initiate potty training without any pressure on parent or child. Generally, the parent will pick one or a few times every day to take the child to sit on the potty. This helps your child become accustomed to something new, the potty, and learn the routine involved with using it. If you pick times when your child is already in the bathroom, such as before bath time or after brushing teeth, it shouldn't be inconvenient and can be used as a fun, positive face-to-face time for parent and child to be together. You can read books together, or have a conversation, or sing a song for a few minutes. Explain what you are doing as you undress him, help him onto the potty, wipe, and then help him empty the potty bowl into the toilet or flush the toilet. Don't forget to wash hands.

Caveat: while potty sits are useful for introducing the process of going potty and can be used to teach some of the hygiene skills such as washing hands, potty sits do nothing to advance the core elimination skills. The best you can hope for is to increase your child's interest in potty training by way of lavish praise or other rewards for desired behaviors and happy accidents. You really shouldn't need to practice potty sits for more than a month no matter what the age of your child before they will have gleaned all of the useful learning from it.

Skills exercised: Primarily useful in pre-learning potty and hygiene skills and ancillary skills.

Potty Timing

Potty timing implies that the parent has identified times of day or intervals relative to drinking, eating and waking when the child is more likely to need to go potty. By timing potty sits or regular potty trips this way your child is more likely to receive positive reinforcement by catching a pee or poop in the potty.

To the extent that you as caregiver are anticipating your child's elimination needs rather than having her experience her body's elimination cues, potty timing will only advance potty-specific skills if you add visual or auditory cues to develop skills 1 and 2. If you are just increasing the odds of happy accidents, then you may be using fewer diapers in the short run but keeping your child in diapers until the same age overall.

Skills exercised: Primarily useful in pre-learning potty and hygiene skills and ancillary skills if used in isolation. Also develop skills 1, 2 and 3 if used in combination with potty cues.

Potty Cues

Potty cues are either visual or auditory signals used by the caregiver for two purposes; first to signal that the child is eliminating so the child will form an association between eliminating and the signal, then to signal to the child that it is time to eliminate.

By combining potty cues with potty timing, ECing families strike a powerful double punch to consistently reinforce mastery of skills 1, 2 and 3 all at once.

A note on Elimination Communication: A growing number of parents today are moving toward potty training as a partial or total replacement for diapering in infants who are still quite young. The caregiver uses careful observation of the child's elimination cues such as squirming and grunting, accompanied by visual and/or auditory voiding cues, to determine when the child needs to eliminate and then offers appropriately timed potty opportunities. This combination basically defines infant potty training. It is a long process requiring a great deal of commitment on the part of the caregivers in order to employ this method fully. Most daycare solutions do not have the ability to practice infant potty training to this extent, but families can still choose to EC while they are with their child even if they cannot do it all of the time.

Skills exercised: Primarily useful in developing skills 1 and 2 if used in isolation. Also develop skill 3 if used in combination with potty timing

Regular Potty Trips

For children who have mastered skills 1 and 2, many families move on to regular potty trips throughout the day, spacing them at intervals appropriate to the child's ability to hold her bladder. Many parents and daycare facilities use one hour as the benchmark. Because these potty trips are initiated by the caregiver instead of the child, they are somewhat dependant upon either the willingness of the child to participate or the ability of the caregiver to get the child to do as she is asked.

Children who thrive on routine and consistency are likely to do well with regular potty trips. Willful children who do not have a specific interest in going potty will be much more challenging.

Skills exercised: Can be useful in developing skills 1 and 2 as well as advancing potty and hygiene skills and ancillary skills.

Wetting Feedback

Wetting feedback is given through the use of diapers that allow the child to experience a sensation of wetness immediately upon eliminating. It appears that having this

immediate feedback to wetting allows the child to associate the sensation with the body's pre-elimination signals that directly precede that feedback.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Switching a child who has been diapered in feel-dry disposable products since birth to Antsy Pants™ is a huge step toward achieving this critical potty skill. You do not have to be actively potty training in the traditional sense of taking your child to the potty for regular potty visits for this connection to take place, and Antsy Pants™ are both waterproof and absorbent enough to fully contain your child's elimination in the same way a disposable diaper would, unlike cloth training pants.

While wetting feedback can be instrumental in building your child's ability to read her body's elimination cues, it is not helpful for the diaper's surface to feel wet continuously and, in fact, the connection between wetting and feeling wet may be compromised instead of strengthened using cotton diapers, which stay wet, if the child is not changed immediately to a dry diaper upon wetting. Leaving wet fabric next to your child's skin can also cause diaper rash unnecessarily.

Skills exercised: Directly targets skill 3, identifying the need to eliminate.

How Do Antsy Pants™ Fit Into Your Potty Training Regime?

Antsy Pants™ address these issues by incorporating a wicking liner that provides immediate wetting feedback with a return to a feel-dry state within about five minutes of wetting, effectively resetting the diaper to provide wetting feedback the next time your child wets as well.

Allowed Accidents

Transitioning a child from regular caregiver-initiated potty trips to child-led potty trips may in some cases involve allowed accidents. Allowed accidents are where the child does not wear a fully absorbent diaper, but instead goes bare bottomed or in regular underwear, perhaps covered in plastic pants. In essence, the caregiver may offer a potty

trip instead of insisting on one, or may just wait for the child to ask to go potty. If the child says no and then has an accident, it is used as a teaching moment.

The premise behind allowed accidents is that by removing the barrier that kept the child from experiencing a connection between her body's voiding cues and the action of elimination (the diaper), your child will learn that the consequence of ignoring her body's cues is an uncomfortable sensation of having pee run down her legs and a puddle on the floor.

One very large caveat regarding this practice: allowed accidents can be very stressful to your child. Younger and sensitive children can easily view accidents as failing instead of a challenge to do better next time. This negative connection tends to set potty training back instead of pushing it forward. In general, I would not suggest forcing accidents on a child under age two to two and a half.

There are also several practical problems with this method. Daycare providers can't help you out here. You are on your own with this one as they have hygiene requirements that are strictly enforced at the state level. Your own patience and attitude toward cleaning up messes is another factor to consider. There will likely be a lot of puddles to clean, and if you have carpets, this means a huge inconvenience and the expense of either renting a machine or hiring a service to deep clean when you are finished potty training. Finally, forcing accidents will not work if your child is a stubborn dirtophile, since the child doesn't care if she is wet or soiled anyway and doesn't want to do things your way. In this case, you are the one who will likely find potty training stressful; not a particularly good route to take.

There are times when allowed accidents can be extremely useful, however. If your child has already mastered skills 1 and 2, is capable of communicating the need to go potty and yet does not do so, a few well-placed allowed accidents may be the kick in the pants your child needs to overcome what may just be laziness. If your child is two and a half or older and has sufficient language skills to understand your explanation of how to avoid more accidents, then a few days of allowed accidents at home could be the majority of your daytime potty training process.

Skills exercised: Directly targets skill 3, identifying the need to eliminate.

Child-Led Potty Trips

To employ child-led potty trips, the caregiver backs away from requiring trips to the potty: "OK, time to go potty!" or asking the child if she needs to go potty, and instead waits for the child to say that she needs to go.

For children who have mastered skill 1 and skill 2 through the use of potty timing or regular potty trips at the schedule imposed by the caregiver, making a switch to child-led potty trips creates a situation in which the child can move quickly to the next stage of potty training by reinforcing the learning of skill 3, identifying the need to eliminate, and asking the child to step up and use skill 4, communicating the need to eliminate. Please note that making this very deliberate switch to child-led potty trips before your child has acquired skills 3 and 4 automatically employs either wetting feedback or allowed accidents. A child at any age and stage of development can learn from wetting feedback without experiencing undue stress, but that is absolutely not the case with allowed accidents. Please read both sections of this document carefully before choosing which method to employ in the teaching of this skill.

Children who have mastered skills 1 through 4 are able to determine when they need to go potty and communicate the need to their caregiver with enough notice to get to the potty.

Skills exercised: Reinforces skills 3 and 4.

Chapter 5: Rewarding Desirable Behavior

Let's set one thing straight: rewards do not necessarily mean candy. A reward is anything that motivates a behavior. Many young children are extremely motivated by seeing happiness or excitement on their parent's face. A little extra one-on-one play time can be a major reward. Anything your child loves to do, like go for a walk, play with a ball, listen to a favorite song or watch a video can be used as a reward.

Older kids can be rewarded with larger prizes that require working toward a goal for a whole day or a week, but younger ones will respond better to consistent small rewards. By consistent, I mean that your child should come to expect that something nice happens immediately every time he exhibits a desirable behavior. It is important to figure out what things actually motivate your child.

I have heard of some pretty strange things used as rewards; an artichoke is one that springs to mind. One of the most interesting was colored beads with different meanings given to a two and a half year old. In our house we used praise, excited calls to grandmas, reading books, face-to-face play time, stickers, and, since my daughter is especially motivated by sweet things, we did go the candy route. At day care she was primarily motivated by praise and by her peers.

Depending on the stage of potty training that you are working on, here are some desirable behaviors that you may want to find creative ways to reward:

- Sitting on the potty
- Trying to put pee or poo in the potty
- Successfully peeing in the potty
- Successfully pooping in the potty
- Telling you when he has eliminated in his diaper (if your child is currently blissfully ignorant of his elimination)
- Telling you he needs to go potty before it happens (if your child is already aware of eliminating after the fact)

- Staying dry all morning / afternoon / day (works for older children but generally not for young ones)
- Pooping, regardless of where it happens (important if your child is one who is frightened by poop)

Chapter 6: Ending Undesirable Behavior

The reality of potty training is that your child is sometimes going to do things that you don't want to encourage. Whether the undesirable behavior is peeing on the living room floor, hiding behind the drapes to poop or refusing to sit on the potty, you need to try to figure out why your child is exhibiting the undesirable behavior before you can work to end it.

One important step in ending undesirable behavior is figuring out what is currently motivating your child to exhibit the behavior in the first place. After all, some undesirable behavior could just be due to a lack of control, such as having an accident on the floor when he doesn't yet know how to read his body's cues about needing to go potty.

Some possible motivators of bad behavior that you may encounter:

Extra attention or "fuss"

If you suspect that your child is doing something you don't want him to in an effort to get more attention, make sure you play down your reactions to the behavior. If you are early in the potty training process or your child is young, be sure to act as though it is no big deal if he has an accident.

Fear

This can be a very strong motivation for some pretty odd behavior, and it can be a tricky one to resolve. As an example, my daughter went through a period of time when she would pee consistently on the potty but run and hide when it was time to poop. She denied that she was pooping, too. We eventually worked through it by first acknowledging that pooping can be scary, then reassuring her and carrying her to the potty either to finish pooping there or at least to dump the poop in the potty "where it belongs". I had her sit on the potty, even if she was finished, and then we would celebrate the poop, no matter where it came out. We also increased her fruit intake to soften her bowel movements so she wouldn't be so concerned about them.

Another potential fear issue involves dealing with standard-sized toilets and the auto-flush variety when you are out in public spaces. You have to address and resolve the fear or you can seriously derail potty training, sometimes even for years. If you have a similar fear issue stuck between your child and potty training for over a month or two, it might be worth mentioning to your child's doctor.

Likes to take baths or showers

I'm not joking here. I know kids who have accidents just to be put in the tub. To solve this one you would have to find a less motivating method of cleaning up, like washing the bottom with a cold, wet washcloth.

Here are some behaviors that you may have to work at eliminating:

Hiding to poop

This is usually about fear, not about trying to upset you. Praise the poop, then take it and your child to the bathroom and let your child flush it down the toilet.

Refusing to go potty

This one can be caused by a number of things; your child may be exerting control if he is in a stubborn stage, or he may think he doesn't have to go because he can't yet read his body's cues. If either of these is the case, you can still work through potty training, but you have to be prepared to tell your child, "It's time to go potty now," and to ignore his complaints.

Having "Accidents"

If your child knows when he needs to go potty and has accidents anyway that you suspect may be intentional, then it is probably about exerting control or liking the attention he gets when he has an accident. I have also seen children have more accidents when parents try to phase out potty rewards. You will have to decide whether to switch to a leak-proof solution or ride this out by toning down your reaction to the accidents. If you are using Antsy Pants™ during day training, then pee on the floor

shouldn't be an issue, but if your child usually stays dry and starts wetting the diapers, the solutions are the same.

Withholding pee or poop

I have heard statistics that about ten percent of children go through a phase where they withhold poop for several days at a time. In my own experience this has always been due to fear of pooping and can be worked through. It is at least mostly mental, but you may be able to help by giving your toddler fruits that will help soften his stool to make pooping more comfortable. Potty books like "Everyone Poops" by Taro Gomi can be useful here as well if your child is old enough to understand.

While I have never heard anyone mention withholding pee, I have experienced that with my own daughter. In her case, we decided that she was trying to manipulate us into giving her candy in exchange for a few drops of pee in the potty, thinking she could come back and put more in later for another reward. We countered this by modifying the reward policy to exclude partial peeing. We expect her to become a lawyer when she grows up.

Putting It All Together

Hopefully you've been marking the details of your situation on the accompanying guide. If so you can now organize your own approach to potty training that makes the most sense given those specifics. If you read through without the guide, take a little time now to go through the sheet and mark the information on it, rereading parts of the document as necessary to ensure your own accuracy.

If the stars are all aligned and it looks like now is a good time to start potty training, you should feel confident about giving your child the learning opportunities he needs to learn each potty skill at his own pace. Hopefully the information in this e-book will help you along the way as new situations arise.

Do Antsy Pants™ fit into your potty training plan?

To learn more about Antsy Pants™ Pull-Up Cloth Diapers, visit GetAntsy.com and see for yourself why they are the ideal diapering/potty training solution for active toddlers and the families who love them.

About the Author

Renee Tice is mother to one charming toddler who was out of diapers at 27 months. Renee is also Director of Fly Baby, LLC and a born researcher and problem solver. She created Antsy Pants™ Pull-Up Cloth Diapers for her daughter when she could not find reusable pull-up training pants to meet her needs, using her fashion design training and the same methodical process she learned creating product for apparel brands such as Nike and Victoria's Secret during her career in the apparel industry. Renee and her family live in the beautiful Pacific Northwest of the United States of America.