

Activities of Daily Living

Dressing

Learning to get dressed builds your child's confidence and independence and gives them a sense of achievement. Children develop at different rates and have different learning styles. Try out different strategies to see what works best for your child. There is no correct order for dressing, and everyone does this differently.

STRATEGIES

- Start with undressing before learning to dress as this will help to boost your child's confidence.
- Break down task into smaller steps to help make the task more achievable e.g. underwear on, shorts on, shoes on.
- Use a visual schedule to help show the steps of the task. Visual instructions are often easier than verbal.
- Trial breaking down the task even further depending on your child's skill level e.g. shorts face the right way (tag at back), hold front of waistband, put one left in leg hole while holding the shorts, put other leg in etc.
- Model getting dressed to your child. Often watching is easier than being given verbal instructions when learning a new skill.
- Use simple instructions e.g. arms up. Use visuals to support verbal instructions.
- Teach orientation of clothing i.e. tops with picture at front, the tag goes at the back.
- Try allowing your child to dress in the mirror to help them see what that are doing.
- Pick a time during the day to practice when you aren't in a rush and your child has ample time to practice. For example, practice of the weekend, or after school and not in the morning before you're racing out the door.
- Try to practice when your child isn't hungry, tired or unwell as this can often lead to frustration.
- Try to minimize distractions when practising dressing. Be consistent with the routine and environment when practising.



- Start with using bigger, loose-fitting clothing.
- Trial elastic waistbands on shorts before buttons and zippers.
- Try having your child sit when putting on pants or shoes. This will help eliminate the need to balance.
- Try practising shorts before pants, t-shirt before a jumper, and larger button before small ones.
- Play games to label body parts throughout the day i.e. Simon Says, to help build body awareness to support your child to understand instructions during the dressing task.
- Start with slip on or Velcro shoes before teaching your child to tie shoelaces.
- Provide lots of praise and encouragement to help build your child's confidence.
- Talk about the weather with your child to support with them choosing appropriate clothing item.
- Let your child problem solve first before jumping in to help. This can help them build confidence and promote independence.
- Some children might have sensory sensitivities that make it hard for them to cope with different textures or tags. Trial clothes without tags, or softer materials to see how your child responds.
- Try marking left and right on shoes e.g. with a pen or nail polish inside the shoe.
- Practice button and zips on different items e.g. teddies, during dress ups, pencil case, lunch box.
- Practice zippers by using a ring or ribbon through to the zipper attachment to make it easier to grasp and pull.
- Work on fine motor bilateral coordination activities to support e.g. posting activities, threading, playing dress up with dolls, craft activities.

