



THE ULTIMATE POTTY TRAINING PROTOCOL

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Potty training can feel like a huge milestone, especially when you're working with a child who has autism. But don't worry—you're not alone on this journey. With the right strategies, patience, and a plan that works for your child's individual needs, potty training can be a smoother experience for both of you. This guide will help you break it down, step by step, to set both you and your child up for success.





1. Look for Signs of Readiness

First things first: Readiness. Potty training won't work unless your child is showing signs they're ready. For kids with autism, these signs might be a little different, or they may show up later, and that's okay. Look for cues like:

- A growing interest in the toilet, even if it's just curiosity about flushing
- Staying dry for longer stretches of time
- Communicating discomfort when they're wet or soiled (even non-verbally)
- Understanding basic instructions or following simple routines

Take your time here. If your child isn't ready yet, that's perfectly fine. Waiting until they're truly ready will make the process smoother in the long run.

2. Pick the Right Tools

Choosing tools that work for your child's sensory needs and comfort level can make all the difference. Some kids with autism may prefer a potty chair on the ground because it feels safer, while others might like a seat adapter on the big toilet. You may also want to consider:

- **Sensory-friendly options:** Soft seats, padded underwear, or a quieter flushing toilet, depending on your child's sensitivities.
- **Visual schedules or social stories:** Many kids with autism respond well to visual aids. You can create a simple schedule with pictures or use a social story to walk them through what to expect.
- **A consistent rewards system:** What motivates your child? Whether it's a sticker chart, extra screen time, or a favorite snack, find a reward that encourages them to keep trying.



3. Establish a Routine

Consistency is everything, especially for kids with autism who thrive on routines. Create a schedule for potty breaks—starting with set times throughout the day, like after meals, before naps, in the morning and even before bed. The key here is to make it predictable, so they know what’s coming next.

You may even want to use a timer, so your child gets a visual or auditory cue for when it’s potty time. This can help reduce the anxiety around transitions and give them a heads-up.

4. Finding The Right Potty Training Schedule

Take a baseline of how long your child is staying dry.

Before starting any sort of potty training, set a timer for yourself, you could start with 15 or 30 minutes and check to see if their diaper is wet. If their diaper is wet every 30 minutes, when you begin to take your child to the bathroom, you may want to do every 20 or 25 minutes so that you can “catch” when they void. If they are dry every 30 minutes when you check them, maybe move your timer to 1 hour and check then. Same thing, if they are wet every hour and dry every 30 minutes, then when you begin potty training, a good middle ground would be to take them every 45 minutes.

5. Pick A Toileting Schedule That Works For Everyone, Including You.

If you are a busy parent and only have times on the weekend to be consistent, then starting with the type of schedule I talked about above from the start will not work for you. Start small, like taking them when they wake up and before they go to bed. This not only helps you create consistency, but they are still getting in the practice of sitting on the toilet daily.



6. Celebrate Every Win—No Matter How Small

In this process, progress is progress! Did your child sit on the potty for a minute, even if nothing happened? That's a win! Did they point to the bathroom, even if it was after the fact? Another win! Potty training, especially for children with autism, is not about how fast they learn but how steadily they move forward. Celebrate every small step with excitement, praise, and their chosen reward. It's the positive reinforcement that helps them connect the dots.

7. Handle Setbacks Gracefully

Accidents are part of the process. They don't mean your child isn't learning, and they certainly don't mean you're doing something wrong. When accidents happen, stay calm. Avoid making a big deal out of it, and gently remind your child of the next step—"That's okay! Let's try again next time." The goal is to keep the atmosphere positive and low-pressure.





8. Build Independence Slowly

As your child becomes more comfortable, begin guiding them toward more independence. This might mean helping them pull down their own pants or wiping with assistance. You know your child best—so go at a pace that feels comfortable for them and give lots of verbal praise and encouragement along the way.

9. Adapt to Your Child's Unique Needs

Flexibility is key. You may need to adjust based on how your child responds. Some kids may prefer using the potty at home first, while others may struggle more with the sensory aspects of public bathrooms. Tailor the process to your child's individual needs and be open to switching things up if necessary.

Remember, potty training is not a race—it's a journey. For children with autism, that journey might look a little different, and that's okay. Patience, positivity, and adaptability will get you through it. Celebrate every small victory, and trust that you and your child will get there in your own time. You've got this!

