

Toileting Strategies Trip Training

Toileting skills can be taught to anyone, and can significantly increase a person's quality of life. There are many benefits to being toilet trained; incontinence may restrict access to some community events and locations, can lead to increased social isolation, result in skin breakdown or irritation, and can negatively affect the student's self-esteem. Almost anyone can be toilet-trained, although a lot of time and commitment from the family, caregivers, or teaching team is often necessary. An occupational therapist can help develop an individualized toilet training protocol for your student, however, the following "Trip Training" toileting tips, recommended by Pat Mirenda, a professor at the University of British Columbia, can benefit almost anyone:

- Caregivers must be committed to working on toileting for 1-3 months. Other goals and learning objectives may be put on hold at this time, and all energy and resources be put towards toileting training.
- Toilet-training can occur in only one training environment; for example, if school is to be the training environment, the training does not need to be carried over into the home...at least not yet!
- Before you begin, determine if your student is ready to actively participate in a training program:
 - Rule out any medical issues that may affect bladder/bowel control
 - Determine if your student show signs of awareness or discomfort with a wet or dirty diaper after he/she has emptied his/her bowels/bladder
 - Determine if your student is able to indicate awareness of the need to empty his/her bladder/bowels
- Get rid of diapers and pull-ups in the training setting...diapers and pull-ups are designed to pull moisture away from the skin, which makes it difficult for your student to determine if he/she has emptied his/her bladder.
- Use simple and consistent language, so that your student understands what is happening and can begin to anticipate going to the bathroom.
- If your student is a boy, determine if he will sit or stand to urinate.
- If your student will sit on the toilet, make sure he/she is seated in a supported position. Your student should be able to sit comfortably on the toilet, and not feel as though he/she is falling through the "hole" in the toilet seat (you may need to add a reducer ring). Your student's feet must be supported, so you will likely need to add a footrest, and possible arm rests and/or a back support. An occupational therapist can support your team in choosing appropriate toileting equipment.
- Determine a motivator to use during the training program; it must be HIGHLY motivating and ONLY available to your student once he/she has gone to the bathroom on the toilet.
- Use a data sheet to record the times of the day your student is wet during the day; record data every day, for one week (recommended checking every 30-60 minutes). This will allow you to determine if there is a pattern to when your student naturally voids, and is key in designing an effective training program.

- Once you have established the natural times your student is voiding, you can design the trip training schedule: plan to take your student to the toilet ~15 minutes prior to the times he/she naturally voids.
- At the scheduled toilet time, give your student a cue that it's time to use the bathroom (i.e. picture symbol for toilet and a verbal cue such as "It's time to go pee." State this positively, but don't make it a question.
- Have your student repeat the cue "go pee" or touch/hand you the picture symbol to model initiating a request for toileting.
- In the bathroom, use prompts to support your student through the routine of getting on to the toilet, but keep talking minimal and neutral.
- Remember, the goal is to void in the toilet, not complete the steps to the toileting routine (i.e. pulling down pants, independently getting on the toilet). Provide your student with minimum prompting required to complete the steps, but don't work on other toilet routine goals at this time.
- Once your student is on the toilet, give he/her the motivator immediately when he/she has voided. If he/she does not void right away, stay on the toilet until he/she does. If required, take a 2-5 minute break off the toilet, but still in the bathroom. After this short break, help your student back on the toilet and encourage him/her student to void. Continue this process until your student has voided, and then provide him/her with the motivator.
- Continue to record data to help track progress.
- You may need to make sitting on the toilet motivating, by adding music, books, or toys to the routine
- You can try turning on the water while your student is on the toilet to encourage voiding.
- If your student is not voiding, speak with his/her parents/physician about increasing fluids to stimulate voiding.
- If your student is wet in between times and indicates that he/she would like to be changed, do so quickly and with minimum fuss (*a minimum of attention and interaction with you*).
- The program should be reviewed after four weeks. If your student is dry at least 80% percent of the time during the day, it's time for the next step, either self-initiating, training in a different environment, or trip training for bowel movements. If he/she is not starting to make any improvements after 4-6 weeks, the goals/strategies should be reviewed.