


TOILETING

Discussion points

- How does your child usually respond when they need to use the toilet?
- Are there sensory factors (sounds, smells, textures) that might make the bathroom difficult for your child?
- When or where do toileting difficulties tend to happen most?
- How does your child communicate their needs around toileting?
- What strategies have you tried so far? Which ones seemed to help?
- Are there any routines or visual supports your child responds well to in other areas that might be able to help with toileting?



Toileting

When toilet/potty training a neurodivergent child, additional structure and visual cues might be needed.

Some children prefer routines, which will reassure them and let them predict what is expected of them. To create a routine for toilet/potty training you will need to use a phrase or signal that indicates the child needs to use the toilet or potty – this should be the same phrase that is used by everyone that is involved with toilet/potty training the child. This could be a signal card, with a picture of a potty on it, or just a particular phrase (be careful to choose one everyone will be happy to use) such as 'potty time' or 'toilet time'.

There will be lots of accidents, but try not to be cross with the child or pay too much attention to the accident. Clean up, be positive and try again.

As soon as the child does a pee or poo on the toilet/potty, reward them. For some children, this can be social praise such as 'well done' or putting a star on the chart. However, some children do not respond to this sort of reward and you may need to use a physical reward such as a short activity that they enjoy.

As successes and rewards increase, the child will learn what is expected of them. For those children who are able to communicate, they will begin to tell you or signal that they need to use toilet/potty. For other children, you may need to continue with a routine of encouraging the child to use the toilet/potty at regular times until they are able to communicate their needs to you.

Using a picture planner is quite important, the same picture planner should be used in all situations. Pictures or images should be printed to visually represent the order of events. Planners should be kept near the toilet/potty where the child can easily see them. An example of this follows on the next page.

You can create and download your own picture planner for toilet/potty training for free here:

[neurodivergencewales.org/en/parents-carers/childrens-picture-cards/](https://www.neurodivergencewales.org/en/parents-carers/childrens-picture-cards/)

www.neurodivergencewales.org

Advice Sheet



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Five Top Tips from parents to help your neurodivergent child with their toileting



Create a welcoming space

Make the bathroom encouraging for the child to enter. "We use fairy lights to make it a nice place, and as my son has a heightened sensitivity to some smells, we spray some light fragrances around the bathroom before he uses the toilet."



Skip the potty?

Change can be a big challenge, particularly for autistic children, so it might be worth considering whether you can move straight from nappies to encouraging them to use toilet with a training seat and a step. That way they haven't got to go through the challenge of another change in the future, moving from potty to toilet.



Be patient

It can take neurodivergent children a lot longer to use the toilet, so they (and you) need to be a lot more patient. Use sensory toys or games, or read a book to encourage children to sit on the toilet for longer periods if necessary.



Build a routine

If your child does struggle with knowing when to go, then try and build it into a routine. For instance in school after every break time, go to the toilet whether they feel like you need to or not, so that the child has more structure through the day.



Explore Sensory Issues

Investigate whether there's anything preventing your child using the toilet. Examples of sensory issues might be that the flush is too noisy, or sensitivity to certain smells. If you're using a public toilet, then it's important to remember that noisy hand driers can be terrifying for children.

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Top Tips Sheet