

Teach Your Toddler Self-Help Skills

Simple self-help skills prepare us for life's daily activities. Someone must teach these skills, also called activities of daily living (ADL). Toddlers should begin to learn these daily tasks.

Self-help skills can be difficult to learn. Not all children learn the same way or are ready to learn at the same time. One skill may be more difficult to learn than others. Learning may take time.

As a result, some parents continue to perform these tasks for their children. Some want to spare their child the frustration of learning. Others lose their patience while waiting for their child to slowly finish the task. It is easier to *just do it for the child*.

However, parents must expect their child *to learn and do self-help tasks*. These skills are necessary for daily living. They also act as a stepping stone to learning other tasks needed for school, field trips, sleepovers, birthday parties, and other social events.

Self-care tasks include:

- Feeding,
- Dressing,
- Undressing,
- Bathing,
- Washing hands,
- Brushing teeth,
- Using the toilet,

- Grooming, and
- Taking care of belongings.

As you begin to teach a self-help skill:

- Know what your child can do.
- Start by giving *simple* explanations. As you perform the daily task for your child, talk about how and what you do.
- Break the task down into simple steps. Keep your instructions simple.
- Allow your child to begin doing the task. He will need much help at first.
- Use positive words – clap your hands as she tries or completes each step.
- Correct him when he makes a mistake. Use gentle, positive words. *“Let’s see, I think it might be easier if you do it like this.”*

Perform each self-help task the same way each time you teach your child. As you and your child perform these tasks daily, he will soon begin to learn the steps. Daily practice, with help and praise, will enable your toddler to become more independent at performing tasks.

When your child can do self-help tasks, she gains a positive self-image and you gain a few more minutes of your day. It is a win-win situation.



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1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889
10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
www.parenthelpline.org

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