

DRESSING SKILLS

The ability to dress is not only an important life skill but also allows children to interact with their peers during play i.e. dressing up games etc. The age at which a child learns to dress and undress themselves will vary depending on a number of factors such as: fine motor skills, balance, spatial organisation etc. as well as their interest in the task and their desire to be independent.

General Tips:

- Before starting encourage your child to help you when they are getting dressed i.e. put their arms out for their coat, feet out for trousers etc.
- When learning dressing skills allow plenty of time. Rushing on a school morning can turn the activity into a negative experience and increase stress level.
- Start with the child taking clothes off. This is easier than putting them on.
- Undressing before bed and helping to put pyjamas on is a good place to start.
- Ensure your child is sitting in a stable position either on the floor, on a chair / firm bed with feet on the floor. Make sure they also have plenty of space.
- Decide on a general sequence for dressing: lay out clothes in a pile in the order that they need to be put on (first item to be upper most). Ensure all items are the right way round.
- Agree a technique for each item e.g. place t-shirt over head first and then put arms through the sleeves.
- Establishing a routine for dressing will help to avoid confusion.
- When buying clothes, look for ones with a motif on the front and / or a label at the back. Encourage your child to use these cues to help with orientation.
- Choose loose fitting clothes with minimum fastenings to start with e.g. tops with easy openings, stretchy waistbands, stretchy socks etc.
- Buy slightly larger sizes to begin with as these tend to be easier to take off and put on.
- Talk through the actions and sequences but keep instructions simple.
- Practice dressing in front of a mirror to provide visual cues and to enable the child to check themselves and ensure their clothes are straight.
- Be patient and praise effort as well as success. Lots of positive reinforcement is important.
- Once your child has achieved success involve them in organising their clothes: set clothes out the night before, lay out in order that they are put on, practice turning the right way round.

Backward Training Technique

- This is where the adult begins the task with the child doing the last step to finish.
- Once success achieved with this step the child then completes the last two steps and so on so the adult does less and less as the child does more.
- In doing so the child will always get the reward of finishing the task.

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