

Dressing skills

Practical ideas
and advice to help
children dress
themselves



Children have to practice dressing themselves to be able to do this on their own. A child with co-ordination difficulties has to put in a lot more physical and mental effort to help them with daily living. The child may have ways of avoiding tasks they find difficult. A child with co-ordination difficulties may always have challenges with some tasks and of learning new tasks and activities.

It is important to praise your child's effort at opportunity. Building a child's self-esteem is the first step towards helping them do things on their own. This also builds their social skills and performance. The following actions can help a child in the home and community environment.

Children develop dressing skills from a young age. However, every child is different and will develop at their own rate. Use this information as a tool to learn what step is next and how to help your child move on to the next stage.

*All references to child / children means either a child or young person.

Age	Dressing skill
12 – 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operates by holding arm out for sleeves and put feet up for shoes • Pushes arms through sleeves and legs through underwear, shorts or trousers • Begins to undress • Pulls socks and shoes off • Takes off hat
24 – 30 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets undressed with help for fastenings and order • Helps pull up elastic waist clothing. For example – shorts, leggings, trousers and so on • Unbuttons one large button
30 – 36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries to put on socks • Puts on front button shirt (without buttoning)
3 – 4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets dressed and undressed with minimal help (using no tie shoes) • Puts on shoes (may be wrong feet) • Puts on socks with little help at times • Pulls down lower clothing. For example, underwear, shorts, trousers and so on • Opens and closes zip on items such as trousers and dresses (this does not include zips which separate fully) • Buttons large buttons • Undo poppers • Unbuckles

4 – 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckles • Connects two part separate zipper on items such as jackets • Puts on socks correctly • Puts on shoes with little help • Knows the difference between front and back of clothing
5 – 7 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dresses without help or supervision • Ties shoes

Things to consider:

Does your child require to complete the task in a seated position if their balance is poor?

- Can your child raise their hands above their head and reach to their feet?
- Does your child have the ability / skills to complete fasteners?
- If your child continues to have ongoing difficulties with dressing, you may wish to consider trying options such as Marks and Spencers “Easy Dressing” range.



Things to try:

- Complete task while sitting if balance is poor.
- Start by asking your child to remove easy clothes first such as loose fitting pyjamas. Once completed successfully, try to put on more difficult items of clothing.

- Try dressing in front of a mirror. It may help your child to check clothes are on correctly.
- Help your child practice doing fasteners on dolls clothes or adult clothes when not on their own body.
- Practice dressing up with fancy dress costumes or adult clothes with different fastenings. Make a game of practicing dressing skills.
- Try big buttons first before trying small polo shirt sized buttons.
- Backward chaining. It is helpful at first to complete all parts of the dressing sequence for your child. Then get them to do the last small part. Once they can do this, have them complete another task. Do this until they complete all parts themselves.
- If you child continues to find fasteners difficult, replace buttons with touch fastener ('Velcro') or avoid clothes with fasteners that they cannot complete just yet. This will help to maintain their confidence in dressing.
- Attach a key ring or a tassel to zip pulls to give more grip.
- Alternatives to tying shoelaces are available on line. This includes; elastic shoelaces, Hickies, or Zubits.



Example of dressing checklist

School clothes

- Pants/Vest
- Socks/Tights
- Top, for example – Shirt/Polo shirt
- Skirt /Trousers
- Jumper
- Shoes/Boots
- Jacket
- Get dressed!

There are other examples of checklists with images online that may be beneficial for your child to use as a reference.

Motivation to practice and build up new skills can be very difficult. Low confidence and low self-esteem can lead to problems when trying to master something on their own.

It may be helpful to break activities into smaller parts. Encourage them to do each part before moving on. Children learn new skills easier by copying others. Give praise at every effort to build confidence. Have fun while you are learning new skills.

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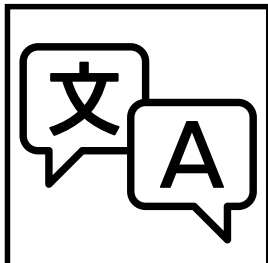
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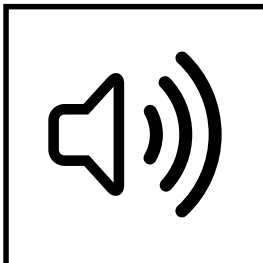
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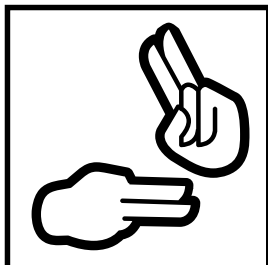
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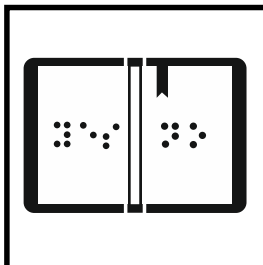
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