

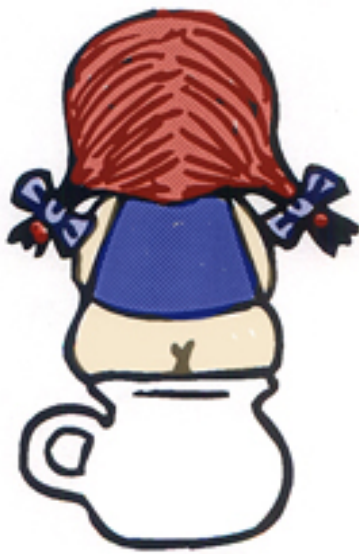
LINE ON LIFE

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One Day with the Potty Patrol *

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Traditionally, **toilet training** involves putting your toddler on a potty-chair when elimination is most likely to occur. If the child urinates or defecates, s/he is rewarded and allowed to get off the potty. However, scolding or spanking often follows, if the child takes too long or has "*an accident*." These traditional methods cause much conflict between parents and children, anxiety and tantrums by frustrated children, not to mention many "*accidents*" and a lot of time and effort. Isn't there an easier way to toilet train your child?



According to two behavioral psychologists, Nathan Azrin and Richard Foxx, an easier way uses the basic principles of learning. In contrast to punishment like scolding or spanking, they recommend using reinforcement and modeling to take the pain out of potty training.

First, they recommend using these methods with children who are at least 20 months old. With their method, the average child can be trained in less than four hours. At 26 months, children can be toilet trained even faster. (Unfortunately, some parents don't want to wait until the child is ready for toilet training.)

The following tips come from their 1976 book, *Toilet Training in Less than a Day*.

1. On the day of training, get rid of any distractions. Other family members should not be around, and the parent doing the training needs to set the day aside for this task.
2. To increase the number of training opportunities, the child needs to drink a great deal – at least eight ounces of liquid per hour.
3. Have small rewards for the children when they perform the steps of the procedure correctly. These can be drinks, small candies – or even better – salty treats like potato chips, crackers, nuts or pretzels. These salty tidbits will help the child drink more fluids.
4. When you first start out, give praise for each success on the way. Later in the training, save the same approval for larger steps – remaining dry or using the potty successfully. At the beginning, the child needs to be reminded to frequently check for dryness or to go to the potty. Later, the children are expected to remind themselves.
5. Before starting the training, the child needs to observe family members engaging in toilet behaviors. On the training day, the child can go through toilet training with a doll that wets. The child can give the doll drinks, have it sit on the potty, have it urinate and give it praise and a treat. With both of these, the child can get a clearer idea of what the parents expect.
6. With loose-fitting pants, the children can easily check every few minutes to see if they are dry. If the pants are dry, praise the child and give a treat.

7. If the pants are wet, the clothing needs to be changed by the child. Try not to nag or spank, but make the child responsible for the consequences of wetting.
8. The first potty sittings should last until the child urinates or until ten minutes have passed. As the day passes, the prompting to sit on the potty should gradually stop. Reinforce successful attempts with more praise, drinks and treats. Teach the child how to empty the potty and reward this successful behavior.
9. Once potty training succeeds, get the children to give themselves their own praise. Make them aware of how good they feel when they succeed. This allows the child to feel "*big*," successful, competent and independent.

Azrin and Foxx say that their method reduces "*accidents*" by 90% at the end of the first day and by 99% at the end of one week. As an additional benefit, the authors indicate that children's independence in toilet training can spread to other daily tasks. The children are likely to assume more responsibility for their own feeding, dressing and other behaviors.

Toilet training can be accomplished in a day – if you pick the right day. Training needs to be postponed until the child is ready for it. Even if it takes more than a day to potty train your child, using rewards rather than punishments makes it more pleasant for everyone involved.

* Adapted from Janet Simons, Donald Irwin and Beverly Drinnin's *Psychology: Search for Understanding*, West Publishing, 1987, page 208.