

Learning to dress yourself – 10 useful tips

Teaching your child how to get dressed can seem like an impossible task. But don't worry, it will happen! Keep these 10 tips in mind to help the process along:

1. Always teach taking off/removal of clothing items first to increase self-confidence

Teaching a child something as simple as removing their shoe will quickly strike their independent interest to figure out how it can go back on. Once they learn how to take clothing items off, they begin to feel more confident in their ability to put it back on (even if they totally can't). Confidence and self-determination are 90% of the game!



2. Get dressed with them

Children learn best by modeling. Monkey see monkey do! Processing and following multiple auditory steps (aka words and commands) can be overwhelming when attempting a new skill. If they're learning to don a shirt, both of you can don a shirt together, side by side.



3. Break EVERYTHING down into simple steps

When speaking, always use short and simple words and give everything a label/name (i.e., "armhole," "head hole," "tongue").

4. Complement verbal commands with a visual of each step (i.e., dressing cards or pictures)

Visuals can help children learn to dress, especially for visual learners. A visual dressing card is a picture or print out showing each step of dressing. Again, auditory processing of verbal commands can be overwhelming, hence the pictures. You can draw your own pictures, or you can use a dressing book/card.

5. To practice putting clothing on, use VERY LARGE size when first learning

Larger holes = greater success and less frustration. Once they get the concept, you can then attempt teaching in a regular size. The added perk is that the larger the size, the longer they will actually fit in them as we all know they grow like weeds!



6. Practice when you're not in a hurry to get out the door

Practice on a non-scheduled day when there is no pressure on either of you.



7. Have them sit down

This takes out the need for them to balance themselves and try to use their core the entire time. Floor sitting or a small child's step stool is ideal.

8. Teach orientation of clothing items (i.e., front, back, side, top, bottom)

This one is huge! Have them identify the front vs. back and all of the correct holes for placement of extremities. Also, teach them to always find the tags!



9. Use a mirror

After they've finished getting dressed, it's always nice to have them double check themselves so they can see if they have left any items twisted (or backward).



10. Be patient and make getting dressed fun!

I hope you all found this information helpful in making you and your little ones more successful at learning to dress together. May your coffee be strong and your morning routines run smoothly!