

Sefton Community

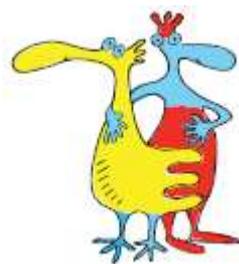
Children's Occupational Therapy

Five Steps to Function

Dressing Skills

Activities of Daily Living (ADL's)

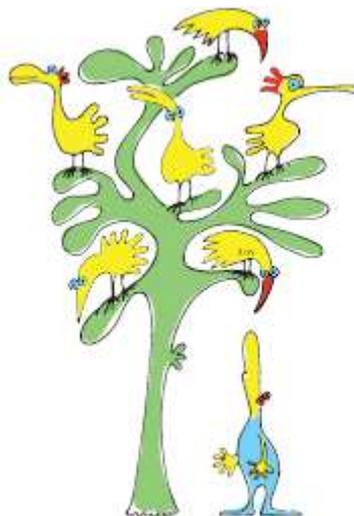
Information Booklet



This booklet contains lots of information and advice to help your child to develop dressing skills.

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What are the 'Five Steps to Function'?

Occupational Therapy is all about function! Through purposeful activities, occupational therapists can support and help children and young people achieve their goals in daily life.

The following five steps are steps to consider when completing any activities with your child:

1. Promote independence

Whenever possible, children should be encouraged to take part in activities, whether it is for the whole activity or part of the activity, so they are taking responsibility for their actions and developing their independence.

2. Develop skills

All activities that your child takes part in will develop their skills. Activities that are familiar can become more fluent or faster, and new activities present challenges so children can make sense of them, problem solve and learn to adapt to achieve success.

3. Increase confidence and self-esteem

When children try something new and are successful, or gain success through practicing an activity they have been trying for a long time, their confidence increases. This is especially true when children feel that their peers are able to do something that they cannot. This sense of achievement helps children when trying other new activities, as they can reflect and be reminded of their previous achievements.

4. Make activities meaningful

When activities are meaningful to a child they are more motivated to try them. Activities that are themed around your child's interest can make a big difference to their enthusiasm! If your child is old enough, they can talk with you about what they want to achieve and set goals themselves. This could be making a sandwich, riding a bike, or simply doing an activity without having to ask for help.

5. Have fun!

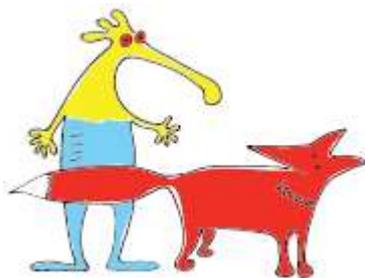
One of the most important parts of learning something new is that it is fun! Children are much more willing and motivated to take part in activities that are fun. Whilst new activities can lead to frustrations, stay patient and relaxed. Encouraging your child to keep trying even when they have made mistakes is important. .

Why are dressing skills so important?

Dressing is an important part of self-care and developing independence. Self-care skills are the everyday tasks that children learn so that they are ready to take part in daily life and are often called Activities of Daily Living (ADL's).

Dressing is a complex task that requires your child to use lots of different skills at the same time to be successful.

- **Active Movement:** Your child must be able to move muscles voluntarily in order to move their trunk (stomach and back) and limbs (arms and legs).
- **Joint Mobility:** Children must be able to fully move their joints voluntarily. .
- **Co-ordination:** Your child must be able to co-ordinate and plan movements in order to be able to stabilise their joints, shift their weight and use their arms, eyes, trunk (stomach and back), legs and fingers together.
- **Balance and stability:** Your child should be able to keep balanced when they change their position e.g. sitting to standing.
- **Arm and hand control:** Children should have a hand preference, be able to use both hands together (bilaterally) and be able to use their hands in a lead-assist way (one hand leads, the other supports). Give-and-take arm movements are useful although not essential.
- **Reach, grasp and release:** Your child must be able to reach in front, behind and above their head, and to be able to grasp and release as needed.
- **Vision:** Your child must be able to focus on an object to identify what they need.
- **Perception:** Your child must have perceptual awareness to be able to choose different items of clothing.
- **Tactile (touch) Sensation:** Your child must be able to respond appropriately to different sensations e.g. textures. They must be able to identify objects without seeing them.
- **Body part awareness:** Children must have an awareness of their own body, all its parts and where they are without looking at them. They must be aware of the two sides of their body and an understanding of their midline (the middle of their body).



Where to begin?

- Start dressing and undressing instruction early to establish a routine.
- Remember undressing is learned before dressing, which can be included into a daily routine early on e.g. taking off pyjamas
- Do each dressing task the same way each time so your child knows what's happening next.
- Minimise any distractions e.g. TV, radio. Don't practice dressing with your child when the house is busy and hectic such as before school. This will be stressful for both you and your child!
- Make sure your child is comfortable, with support if needed on a chair, bed, floor or standing.
- Use clear instructions - speak slowly using simple language.
- Sit next to your child or behind them, to prompt them through the activity.
- Describe what you are doing as you are doing it e.g. "*I am putting your right foot in. Now I am putting your left foot in.*"
- As your child begins to expect the next step, allow time for them to have a go e.g. pause as your child's hand is placed in the sleeve hole and allow time for them to push their arm through independently.
- Give your child enough time to react. It may be that they need a little extra time to think about what you have asked them to do and how to move their body to do it!
- Always encourage and praise your child's efforts.
- For a younger child, the use of dressing songs can help.



Clothing

- When buying clothing think about your child's range of motion or joint mobility e.g. are they able to move their arms and legs easily without support?
- Think about sleeve options, fasteners, neck openings and fabrics. These can all affect your child's ability to dress independently.
- Easy-fit styles are better when starting to practice dressing skills.
- Avoid tight fitting clothing.
- Front opening clothing is helpful when dressing individuals with limited joint mobility.
- Oversized clothing is helpful for dressing practice, but it may not be appropriate for daily use if it draws attention to the person's dressing skill level or disability.
- Generally start with larger outer clothing and work inward.
- Wraparound clothing can be easier.
- Short sleeves may be easier than long.
- Have your child wear t-shirts, sweat shirts, pants etc. with a picture on the front. Point the picture out to your child. This is a good visual prompt and skill to learn for your child to check when getting dressed.



- Help your child to identify the back of their clothing by having a label or using coloured thread. Encourage your child to find this mark when they pick up their clothes to get dressed. You may need to remove other labels as these might be confusing.
- If your child does not like labels in clothing, using a coloured fabric pen would also work.
- For tops, you could mark the inside, bottom front edge of the clothing with coloured thread. But, choose either to mark the back or front of the clothing and stick to that so your child isn't looking for lots of different markings.
- Lay the garment out flat on a table (or the floor) front facing downwards. Roll up the bottom, back edge of the clothing to give a good grip to reveal the special mark identifying the front.
- Choose a coat with a contrasting lining.
- Lay clothes out flat in front of the child in the order that they are going to be put on to help your child practice sequencing. Place the end which is going to be put on first, nearest to your child.





Ways to learn dressing skills

Backward Chaining

Here the adult begins the task, with the child only doing the last step. Gradually the adult does less as the child is able to do more of the task themselves. This way the child always gets the reward of finishing the task.

Example of Backward Chaining

Example 1: Putting on a T-shirt

Step 1: Let your child pull their t-shirt down from their shoulders after you have helped them put their arms in the sleeves

Step 2: Let your child put one arm in the T-shirt after you have helped with the other arm

Step 3: Let your child put both arms in the T-shirt after you have pulled it over their head and neck

Step 4: Let your child pull the T-shirt down their neck to shoulders after you have put it on their head

Step 5: Let your child put the T-shirt on their head and complete all steps themselves

Example 2: Taking off a T-shirt:

Step 1: Let your child remove the T-shirt from their head

Step 2: Let your child remove T-shirt from their neck

Step 3: Let your child remove T-shirt with one arm in and one arm out

Step 4: Let your child remove the T-shirt with one arm in and one arm half out

Step 5: Let your child remove the T-shirt with both arms in and T-shirt pulled up to shoulders

Step 6: Let your child remove the T-shirt

When using a backward chaining technique, it can take time for your child to move on from one step to the next, so lots of praise and encouragement at each step may be needed.

Forward Chaining

This is when the child starts the task e.g. putting the T-shirt over their head, whilst you support them with the rest of the task. Then you add a step for them to complete e.g. putting the T-shirt over their head then arm in one sleeve. The child needs to be motivated to begin the task themselves.

When using a forward chaining method, always demonstrate the correct technique first, telling your child what you are doing at each stage e.g. *I am unbuttoning the shirt, I am taking your arm out of the sleeve*, and so on. Try to keep the same order each time.

Advice on Fastenings – Zips, Poppers and Buttons

There are lots of different fasteners on clothing including Velcro, buttons, zips, buckles, poppers/snaps, shoelaces to name a few! So for your child, trying to learn them all can be a challenge!

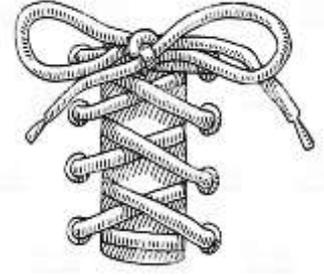
Helpful tips:

- Start early – introducing toys and games with buttons, handles to grasp and moving parts
- Let your child copy what you do by showing them how to do it.
- Verbal prompts can be helpful such as '*pinch and push*' when fastening buttons. Keep prompts short and consistent.
- Always break down the task by working backwards from the end of the task (known as backwards chaining)
- Hand-over-hand help may be needed as well as showing your child, if they are a more 'hands-on learner'.
- Sometimes using a picture card with a step-by-step of each fastening can be helpful.
- Choose the right time e.g. not just before you are walking out the door to do the school run!
- Start with the fastener in front of your child NOT on them e.g. laid on the table, or hanging on the back of a chair.
- Always practice with large fastenings first before moving onto smaller ones, as these are easier for small hands to practice with and will increase success.
- It is important for your child to learn the movements they need to do to and where their body needs to be in relation to the fastening e.g. hands on the buttons, to be successful.
- Playing dress up is a great way to practice fasteners.
- When practicing fasteners try to keep the same actions each time e.g. use one hand to support (helping hand) and the other hand to complete the action
- Undoing fasteners is easier to learn first.
- Use old shirts – cut holes bigger where the buttons fasten for your child to practice and be successful
- Vertical button holes are easier than horizontal button holes.
- With buttons, practice on a fixed hole first e.g. posting coins into a money box, then move onto more flexible holes e.g. a button snake
- When practicing fastenings, it can be helpful if the buttons or zippers are a different colour to the fabric to help them stand out.



Tying shoelaces

Shoelaces are complex fastenings requiring your child to use different skills at the same time including motor planning skills (planning the movements their body needs to make) and bilateral coordination (using hands together).



Some children are keen to learn how to tie their shoelaces, so they don't have to keep asking for help and can wear the trainers or shoes that they really like, especially if they are about to start secondary school. However, children can become quite frustrated when practicing this task as problems can keep happening whilst they are learning including:

- If the laces are not tied tightly enough they can come undone easily meaning your child has to keep re-doing them
- If the laces are too short, your child might not be able to fasten the shoelaces properly.

So lots of patience is needed for them to be successful!

Helpful tips:

- This task is best learned using a forward chaining method i.e. your child learns the first step first. It is helpful to master the first step before moving onto the next. Each step can take several practices, so requires lots of patience from both you and your child!
- Sit in a comfortable, balanced position, with your child's back against something.
- Always practice using thicker "fluffier" laces rather than thinner laces as these tend to come undone much more quickly.
- At first, it is easier to practice laces if the shoe is on your child's lap or a table in front of them rather than on their foot.
- Practicing with laces which have different coloured ends can be helpful.
- Practice during weekends or holidays, when you have time to sit without the pressure of having to be somewhere else.
- Don't rush! This skill takes time to achieve and is best achieved when practiced slowly. Speed will come when the fluency improves.
- Once your child is able to fasten the shoe on their lap or table, have them put the shoe on and practice in a seated position with their foot (and shoe) on a small stool or chair in front of them.
- If your child is struggling with tying laces, alternative shoelaces and techniques are available if they want to try this option. (Ask your child's occupational therapist for suggestions). Some children however want to learn the same as everyone else, which can add to their frustrations!



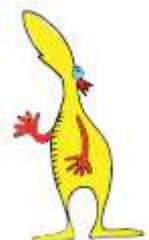
Socks

Putting socks on may seem pretty simple to adults. But for a child, this is something new and can be a complicated task for them to achieve, often leading to frustration and lack of motivation to try.



Helpful tips:

- To start practicing with your child, have a pair of socks that are a little bigger than necessary as this can help them get the sock on their foot more easily.
- Choose a time of day when your child is wide awake and has plenty of energy.
- Sit at their level – this could be on the floor, on the bed, next to them on a chair.
- Try teaching with a pair of socks that have different colours for the heel and toes. This will make it easier for your child to position the sock correctly as they try to put it on.
- Show them how you put your own socks on your feet. Tell your child what you are doing as you go through each step e.g. *"First we get our socks."*
- Use small steps to help them put the process together.
- Use visual cues to help e.g. point out the coloured heel of the sock, and then touch the heel of your child's foot. Say, *"See? The heel of the sock will go on your heel."*
- Show them how to scrunch up their sock and put it on their toes first. Then ask them to pull the sock up towards their ankle. If necessary, have them adjust the sock so that the heel and foot are in the right place.
- Using songs or rhymes to increase your child's body awareness of the different parts of their feet may be helpful before putting their socks on, so they become more familiar with where the socks need placing. For example:
 - Say good morning to the different parts of their feet whilst tapping them e.g. 'Good morning toes, good morning soles, good morning heels, good morning ankles, good morning feet'
 - Complete actions whilst saying 'Wiggles your toes, point your feet, 5 circles in, 5 circles out, shake your feet all about'.
- Use lots of praise and encouragement! Sounds simple, but it can make a big difference especially if your child gets easily frustrated!
- Only help if necessary! It may be tempting to jump in and help your child at the first sign of struggle but remember, this is a learning process for them. It is important to always let them try first, then ask for your help if they get stuck rather than just rely on you to fix it straight away.

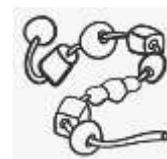


Activity suggestions

There are lots of activities and games that you can play with your child which will help them to practice the skills needed to be successful with dressing. Fun = motivation for your child, and they won't know that they are working on the skills they need for dressing!

Below are some suggestions for you try:

- Ripping paper/card to increase hand strength needed when tightening laces, pinching buttons, holding clothing
- Paper weaving and sewing games – can help your child to understand how buttons and laces go behind material and are posted through
- Threading beads onto a string to practice using hands together
- Tying bows with ribbon, or using a dressing gown belt, as this is less likely to slip
- Dressing dolls give good practice opportunities
- Using clothes pegs – this can be to attach to string, or use to move small items from one place to another – to develop pinch and grip strength
- Lacing cards – these are great for all ages to practice using hands together
- Using tweezers or tongs to move small items from one container to another – to develop hand strength and manipulating different sized items
- Hanging and climbing activities – to develop shoulder strength and grasp
- Pushing and pulling games – to develop shoulder strength
- Weight bearing activities e.g. animal walks, wheelbarrows to develop shoulder and core strength and stability
- Yoga poses – to develop core/shoulder/pelvic stability and balance skills
- Balancing games e.g. musical statues
- Eye-hand coordination games e.g. ball games
- Posting coins/counters into money box to develop grasp needed to hold zippers, buttons, laces
- Folding paper and putting it in an envelope then posting it in the post box develops using hands together and intricate hands skills at the same time!
- Connect 4 – a fun activity to develop pincer grasp and pinch and grip strength
- Wikkisticks – these wax moulding sticks are great for practicing shoelaces as they are flexible but don't move around once in place!
- Peeling sticks of different sizes – ideal to practice fingertip and thumb grasp and using hands together
- Jigsaw puzzles – for copying skills and using hands together
- Hole punching patterns in paper - a great activity for developing hand strength and using hands together
- Nuts and bolts and construction toys e.g. LEGO, Mecchano, K-nex – great for using hands together and developing hand strength particularly for smaller pieces
- Simon Says – an action game to help develop copying movements and body awareness



If you require any further advice on the information in this booklet, please do not hesitate to contact the Children's Occupational Therapy team in your area.

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(Areas covered - L20, L21, L22, L23, L30,L31, L38, Sefton parts of L10)

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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