

Centre Region Down Syndrome  
Society Presents

# TOILET TRAINING TIPS AND TRICKS

for people with Down Syndrome  
and other disabilities

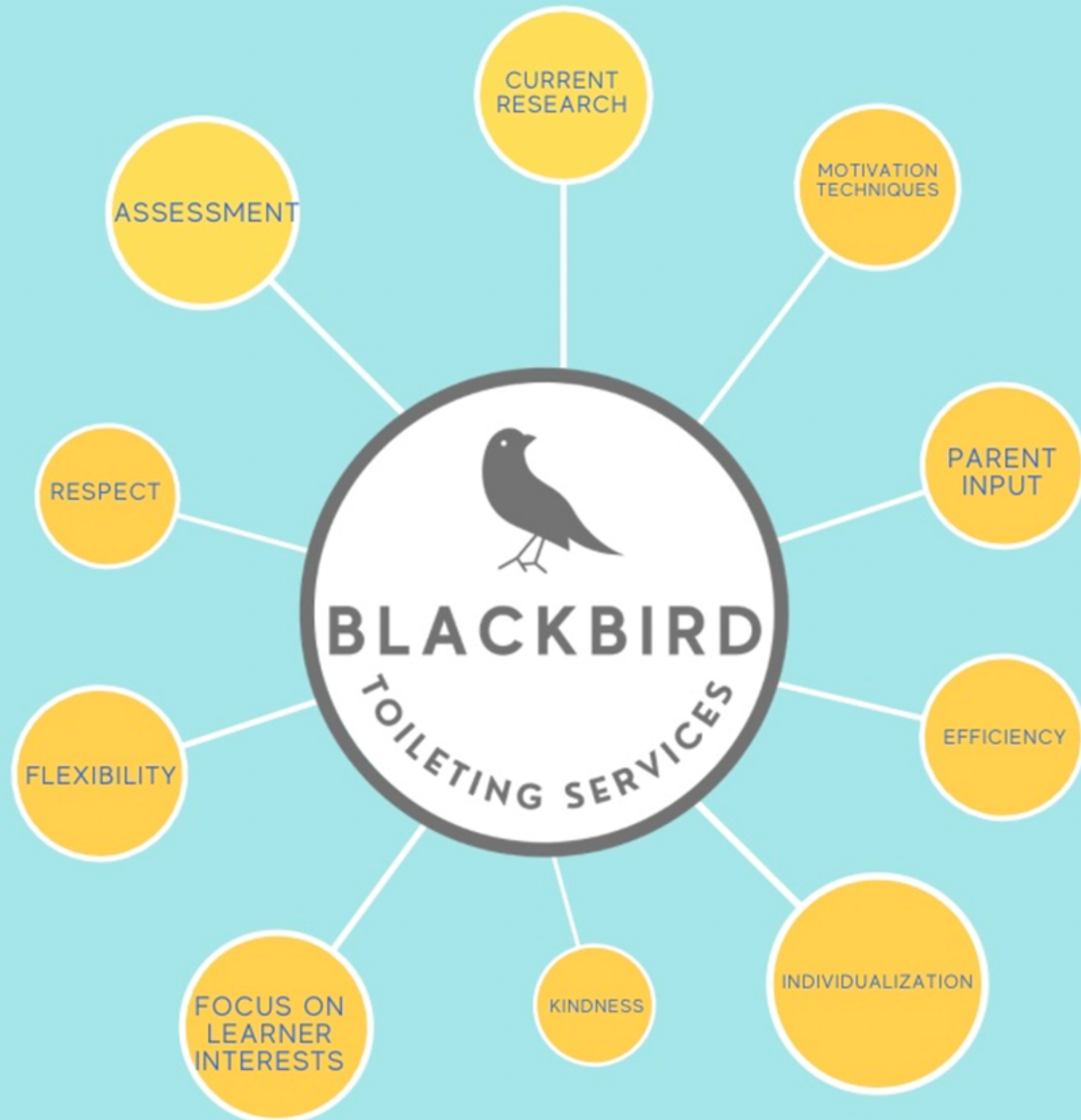


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**[blackbirdtoileting.com](http://blackbirdtoileting.com)**

# ABOUT ME & BLACKBIRD TOILETING SERVICES!



We use a behavioural model to support toilet learning for any children, teens, or adults who are struggling with this crucial skill!

**We work in the homes of families around B.C., and also provide online courses and support via Zoom to anybody, anywhere!**

I have worked with children with disabilities since 2000 and focused on toileting since 2010. I have worked with thousands of families on toileting, including many learners with Down syndrome.

I am a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst, I have a Masters' degree in Special Education and a Doctoral degree in Inclusive Education.

# HERE WE GO!



Let's dig into some FAQs about  
toileting learning + Down syndrome!

# WHY CAN TOILET LEARNING BE EXTRA TRICKY FOR KIDS WITH DS?

Medical/Physical	Behavioural	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• motor coordination delays</li><li>• gross motor development delays</li><li>• constipation related to medical conditions</li><li>• chronic GI issues</li><li>• fine motor challenges</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lack of motivation to use the toilet</li><li>• delays with impulse control, attention span</li><li>• lack of concern about wet/soiled diaper</li><li>• willfulness</li><li>• difficulties breaking an old routine (e.g., getting used to going to the bathroom rather than using a diaper)</li><li>• family readiness (e.g., need to prioritize other therapies/interventions above toileting)</li><li>• sensory issues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• difficulties communicating the need to go to the bathroom</li><li>• lack of understanding about why using the toilet is important</li><li>• difficulties with generalizing skills</li></ul>

Table adapted from "Potty Time for Kids with Down Syndrome" by Terry Katz, PhD, and Lina Patel, PsyD

# HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS READY?

First of all, you know those common signs of readiness you hear about?

For example:

- being uncomfortable in a dirty diaper
- showing an interest in the toilet
- asking to wear underwear
- staying dry for 2 hours at a time

# THEY DON'T MATTER!

There's no research to indicate your child needs to do those things to be successful with toilet learning!

Actually, hardly any of the learners I work with in practice display any or all of these so called prerequisites!

So, what does matter?

# SITTING ON THE TOILET!

In my view, the only really crucial skill a learner must have before starting is the ability to sit on the toilet relatively comfortably for a few minutes.

They can do so with a favourite item (e.g., watching a show) and should have a comfy seat and footstool, too!

If the learner doesn't do this yet... don't sweat! They may need some gradual desensitization to the toilet first, but it's possible!

# ARE YOU READY?

I find it's actually more helpful to think of whether the parent(s) or other support person are really ready for toileting, rather than the learner...

- Do you have a plan to follow? (Stick around if not ;)
- Are you able to prioritize toilet learning for at least a few weeks?
- Do you have a support person to call on if you get stuck or need an extra helper?
- Can you maintain an extremely positive attitude throughout the process?



# IS IT BETTER TO USE A SMALL POTTY OR THE ACTUAL TOILET?

**It depends! The toilet is generally best for generalization purposes, but COMFORT IS KEY.**

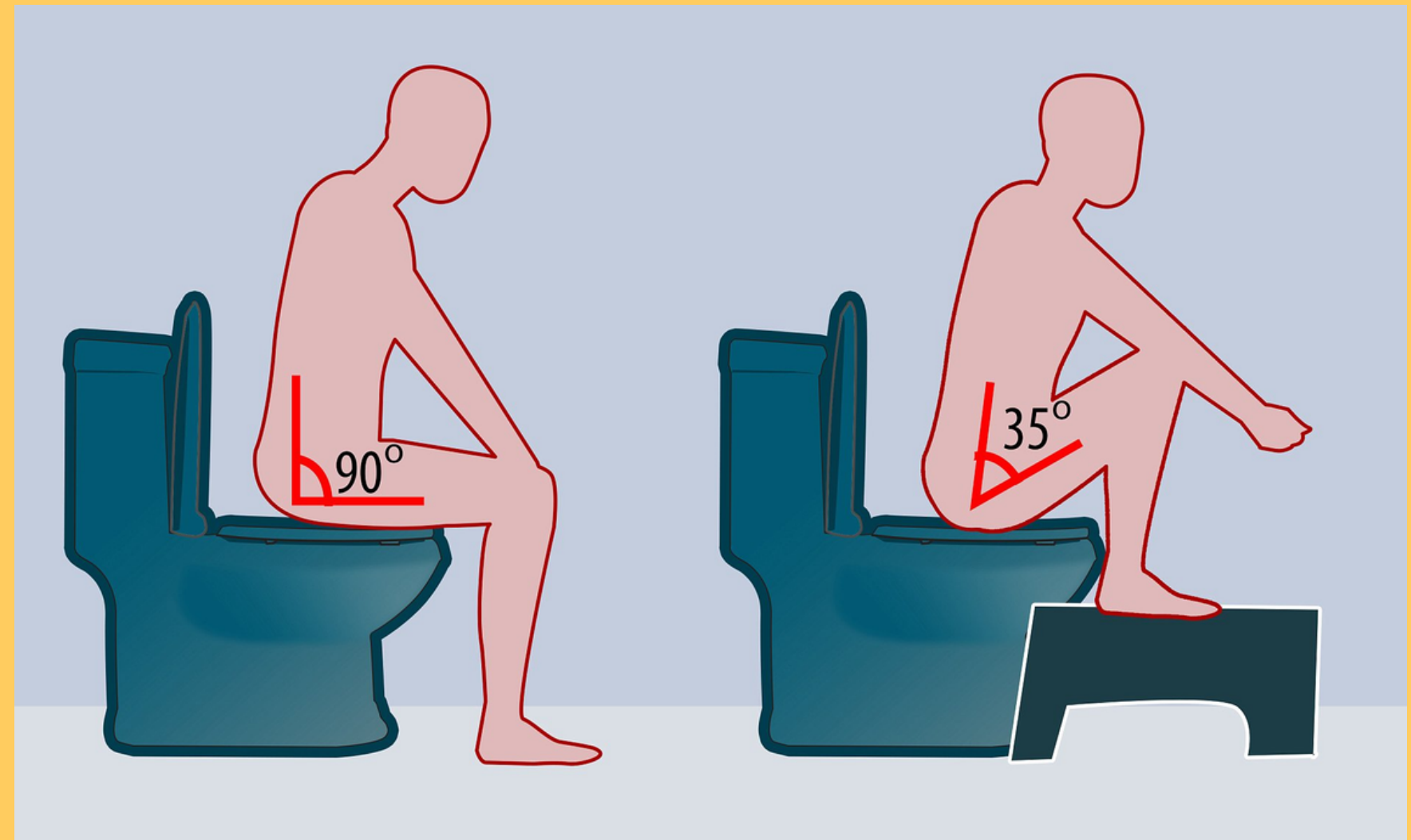
- **Does the learner have a preference?**
- **Can they get on the toilet easily?**
- **Do they have a negative history with the toilet?**

DO YOU  
RECOMMEND ANY  
SPECIFIC  
EQUIPMENT?

**Think soft and stable!**



And, ask your OT/PT!



IS IT OKAY TO OFFER  
TREATS/REWARDS AFTER MY CHILD  
HAS A SUCCESS ON THE TOILET?

**Yes, yes, one  
thousand times,  
YES!!!!**

# SUPER SPECIAL REWARDS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE!!!

- Making up a secret handshake and doing it with the child after each pee/poop in the toilet
- Facetiming grandparents
- Money
- Installing a disco ball in the bathroom
- A wacky waving inflatable tube man
- Kinder eggs
- Lighting a candle for child to blow out
- Playing videos made by peers at school
- Stacking cups
- Puzzles
- Lego sets
- Surprise eggs
- A toy the child had seen on a commercial and begged for many times
- Ice cream
- Mini crane machine
- Corn on the cob
- Earning a piece of a larger toy set after each pee/poop in toilet
- Access to iPad or other technology
- Playing a certain YouTube video

MY CHILD SITS ON  
THE TOILET FOR A FEW  
SECONDS BUT THEN  
WANTS TO LEAVE. HE  
DOESN'T SIT LONG  
ENOUGH TO PEE.  
WHAT CAN I DO?

**Motivate, motivate, motivate!**

**Introduce some super special stuff that can be done only while sitting on the toilet!**

**These things shouldn't be QUITE as special as what you'll offer after your child actually pees/poops, but still pretty darn special!**

I HAVE TRIED TAKING MY CHILD TO THE TOILET EVERY 30 MINUTES AND HAVING HER SIT THERE FOR 5 MINUTES TRYING TO PEE. WE HAVE BEEN AT IT FOR MONTHS AND SHE'S NEVER PEED. WHAT AM I DOING WRONG?!

**Your child may have learned that the routine involves sitting for a few minutes, then leaving... they're missing the pee/poop part!**

**To teach it, you may need some longer sittings (at times your child really does need to pee/poop, and with fun stuff to do while sitting on the toilet)!**

**See 'the long way' and 'the short way' described in the video series Toilet Training for Everyone: It's Never Too Late! Revised and Expanded on Autism Community Training's website! This will help you plan out the length of sittings. A lot of kids with DS really benefit from a more immersive 'launch.'**

CAN I WORK ON  
TOILET LEARNING  
WITH MY CHILD  
WHILE HE IS STILL  
IN DIAPERS/PULL-  
UPS, OR DO I  
NEED TO SWITCH  
TO UNDERWEAR?

It depends....diapers are like portable toilets!  
A lot of learners won't fully grasp the concept of wet vs. dry while in diapers. I generally suggest having the learner wear underwear, and expecting/accepting accidents!

But if that seems like too much, you could try having the learner wear diapers/pull-ups between trips to the toilet, and then introduce underwear once they are consistently dry and peeing/pooping only in the toilet.

However, many learners will just start waiting for their diaper if they know it's coming back. If progress stalls, making the leap to underwear is probably necessary.

IT'S SO HARD TO  
GET MY CHILD TO  
STOP WHAT HE'S  
DOING AND GO TO  
THE BATHROOM  
WHEN IT'S TIME.  
WHAT CAN I DO?

**Again - motivate, motivate,  
motivate!**

**Offer some special incentive to  
go to the bathroom before you  
introduce the idea of going to  
the bathroom!**

**For example, say, "Let's watch  
some Bluey! Cool, we'll do it in  
the bathroom!"**



HOW  
SHOULD I  
REACT  
WHEN MY  
CHILD HAS  
AN  
ACCIDENT?

**Calm and cool! Calm and cool!**

**Seriously, try rehearsing your reaction ahead of time.**

**I recommend having a standard line to say: my favourite is "let's get to the toilet."**

**Work on using a neutral tone, no scolding, no excess comforting either.**

MY CHILD WAS DOING  
AMAZING WITH  
TOILETING, HARDLY  
ANY ACCIDENTS FOR  
WEEKS, THEN STARTED  
HAVING MULTIPLE  
ACCIDENTS PER DAY  
ALL OF A SUDDEN.  
WHAT GIVES?!

You may need to temporarily reintroduce some of the elements that were part of your initial toileting plan.

These could be things like more reminders, set sitting times, super special rewards....

But also, consider behavioural variables!

MY CHILD IS  
DOING GREAT  
WITH TOILETING  
AT HOME, BUT  
HAS MANY  
ACCIDENTS AT  
SCHOOL.

This challenge needs to be addressed  
AT SCHOOL. It's potentially a generalization  
issue.

Can you send some of the things you used  
as part of the toileting plan at home to  
school?

Can school staff provide the same sort of  
support you did at home?

MY CHILD IS DOING GREAT WITH PEEING IN THE TOILET BUT DOESN'T SEEM TO GRASP THE CONCEPT OF POOPING THERE. SHE WILL ALWAYS ASK FOR A DIAPER AND POOP STANDING UP WHILE WEARING IT. HOW CAN I HELP HER LEARN?

This is unfortunately pretty tricky! We actually have a whole course about it, called Poop Training 101.

Things to consider:

- is she comfortable on the toilet?
- are her feet elevated above her bum?
- does she have any challenges with constipation?
- might it help to let her poop in a diaper on the toilet first?
- is she sitting on the toilet long enough?

# MY CHILD CAN'T SEEM TO PEE/POOP ANYWHERE BUT AT HOME. HOW CAN I HELP HER WITH THIS?

First, create a continuum of bathrooms, ranging from your home bathroom to a dirty, stinky stadium one, and work slooowly down that continuum.

Then, bring some pieces of home with you!

- Same toilet seat
- any visuals you might use
- same prizes or prize bag
- same things to do while sitting on the toilet

You might have to replicate the conditions of early toilet learning from home in each new setting at first.

I DON'T FEEL  
FULLY READY TO  
DIVE INTO  
TOILETING BUT I  
WANT TO MAKE  
SOME PROGRESS.  
WHAT CAN I DO?

How about trying one toilet trip per day?

Pick a time you know your child is likely to need to pee.

Have them sit on the toilet at that time (with some fun stuff to do!) for up to 30 minutes.

If they pee, offer a super special reward/treat.

Then, go on with your day as usual!

Over time, you can add more toilet trips at other times your child needs to pee.

# THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE!

You can email me at [katie@blackbirdse.com](mailto:katie@blackbirdse.com) with any questions!

 @toileting101

