

## Washing hands and hygiene



Using visuals alongside will also help remind your child of the process and will help develop their independence.

## Dressing and undressing



Dressing and undressing themselves will help your child develop their confidence, independence and motor skills.

- Can your child recognise their own coat and shoes?
- Can they put their coat on, but may need with zips or fastenings?
- Can they push their foot into their shoe, but may need help with fastening?
- Can they hang up their coat on a coat peg?

These are skills that can be practiced at home before going to school. Build up in small steps, with consistent simple prompts.

## Potty Training



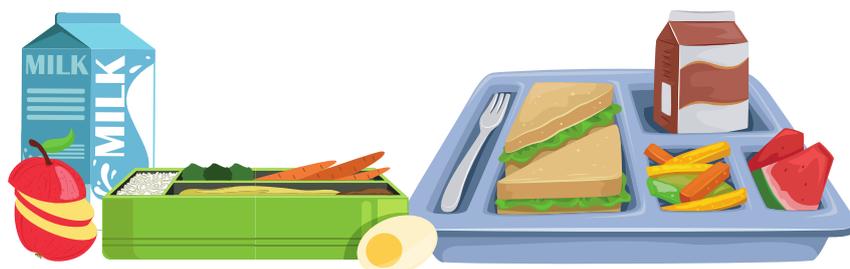
Potty training children with additional needs can be done in much the same way as teaching a child without additional needs. The ERIC guidance advises;

- Children with additional needs can't always communicate so you can't rely on their signals to tell you when they're ready to potty train. Knowing how often your child goes for a wee or poo will really help. You can then create a potty or toilet routine based on the information in the chart.
- It's important that your child feels relaxed, comfortable and secure about using a toilet or potty. If you start with the toilet you should use a footstool to help your child feel confident and safe.
- Drink plenty: Make sure your child is having 6-8 drinks of water-based fluid a day to help keep their bowel and bladder healthy.
- Check for constipation: Your child should poo at least four times a week and the poo should be soft and easy to pass.
- Use easy clothing: Clothes that are easy to pull up and down are the best. Choose clothes that are easy to wash and dry.
- Get into a routine: Don't ask your child if they need a wee or a poo as they might not know what this is to begin with. Call it 'potty time' or 'toilet time' and go every couple of hours.
- Keep it short: Don't let them sit for too long on the potty or toilet, two or three minutes is fine. Keep some toys handy to occupy them while they sit.
- Encourage boys to sit down to wee: They might also need a poo and sitting down will help them to go. They may empty their bladder better sitting down too.
- Give lots of praise: For each little step like sitting on the potty, washing hands and getting dressed. Rewards are a good incentive – make them small and instant, like a sticker.
- Be patient: It may take some time to learn, so don't be surprised if there are lots of accidents to start with. You might decide your child isn't ready, in which case stop and have another go in a few weeks.

Using visuals alongside will also help remind your child of the process and will help develop their independence.



## Eating



Eating a hot meal or packed lunch is an important skill for school. Encourage your child to use at least a spoon for hot meals and then move on to a child sized knife and fork. Aim to sit and eat your meal with them at the same time so that you can support the social interaction and model using the cutlery.

Packed lunches can be encouraged by having picnics in the garden or frontroom, encouraging your child to eat savoury items before fruit or yoghurt. Encouraging these skills will support children develop independence, help to teach them how to have awareness of their bodies and how to be healthy. They are also working on fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination as they eat. Fine motor skills are important for later holding pencils or tools.

### Sources of support available to help you to help your child:

#### Toileting -

- <https://www.eric.org.uk/early-years-and-education-professionals>
- [https://contact.org.uk/media/1157828/potty\\_toilet\\_training.pdf](https://contact.org.uk/media/1157828/potty_toilet_training.pdf)

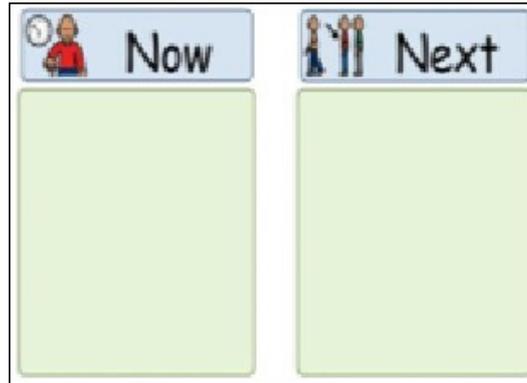
#### Sleep -

- <https://cerebra.org.uk/download/sleep-a-guide-for-parents/>
- [https://contact.org.uk/media/1183103/helping\\_your\\_child\\_sleep.pdf](https://contact.org.uk/media/1183103/helping_your_child_sleep.pdf)

#### Feeding and Eating

- [https://contact.org.uk/media/1179454/feeding\\_and\\_eating.pdf](https://contact.org.uk/media/1179454/feeding_and_eating.pdf)

## Routine



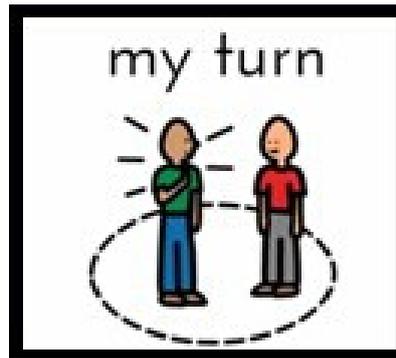
Routine is very important to help children feel secure and to support their understanding. Having a consistent routine at home that is supported by a visual timeline will help children. The reception class is also likely to use a visual timeline, so by introducing your child to the same pictures, they will be more independent and reassured when they start.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Aug 17 X	Aug 18 X	Aug 19 X	Aug 20	Aug 21	Aug 22 Buy new school shoes	Aug 23
Aug 24	Aug 25	Aug 26 Hair cut	Aug 27	Aug 28	Aug 29	Aug 30
Aug 31	Sept 1 Start school	Sept 2	Sept 3	Sept 4	Sept 5	Sept 6

As you get closer to the date that your child is due to start a new setting, you begin to adjust to a new routine.

- Introduce new uniform, bags, shoes etc.
- Walk past the new building as part of your daily routine.
- Introduce a countdown calendar for 2 weeks before the start date, you can add all the exciting' things which will happen and let your child cross off the days.

## Playing together and sharing

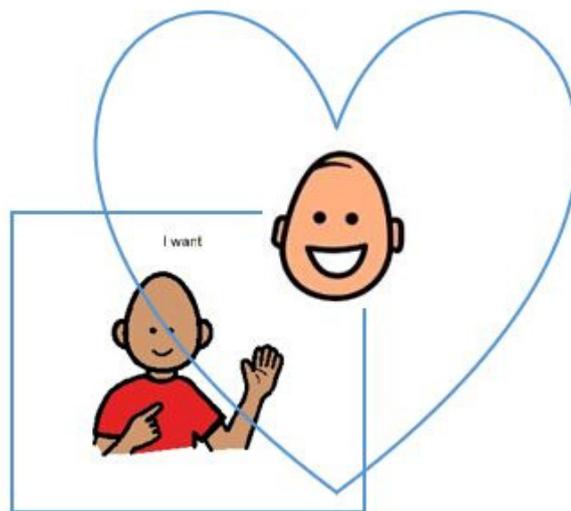


Playing together and sharing are really good skills to practice with your child before they go to school, particularly if they find interactions difficult or have spent a long time away from other children. If the new school has photos on its website, or if you have been given a photobook, you can look at the pictures with your child – the rooms, the activities and the toys. Communicate with your child using these visuals to help them anticipate playing with new friends with these new activities.

A few ways to practice turn taking:

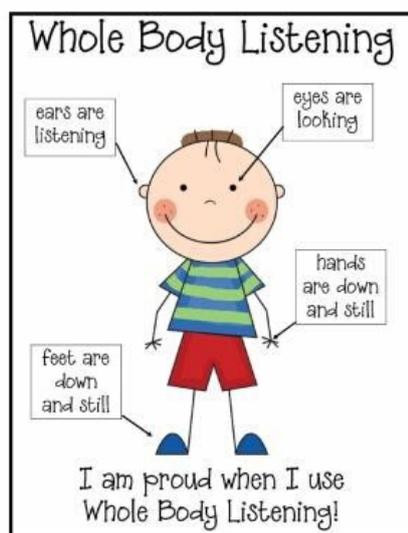
- Rolling a ball between each other stating "Mummy's turn" and as you roll it "Henry's turn". Blowing bubbles "Molly's turn to pop." Blow some more saying "Daddy's turn to pop".
- Put all the pieces of a favourite jigsaw into a bag and 'take turns' with your child to pull one out saying "Henry's turn" then "Mummy's turn" until the puzzle is complete. Use a 6/8 piece puzzle so the child doesn't have to wait too long for their turn.
- When playing cars, play alongside your child with a different car. After a few minutes ask "Molly can Daddy share your car? You have this one and I will have that one".

## Communication skills



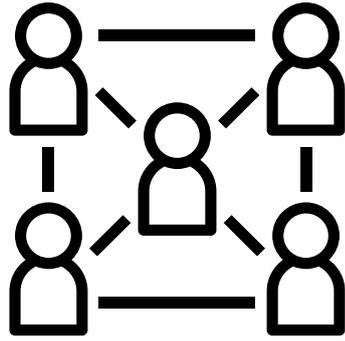
Communication skills are important whatever stage your child is at and whatever their preferred mode of communication. Being able to express their worries or frustrations, being able to follow instructions, keeping safe and showing what they want or like will all help them to settle successfully. Ensuring that the receiving setting knows the best way to understand your child and to help them understand is essential. Continue to develop their skills before they start by;

- Using visuals for transitions, to encourage choice making and to support activities will help with this.
- Being consistent with language that you model will help children learn new words, Makaton signs or PECS symbols.
- Join the child in what they are choosing to play with and follow their lead. Watching, copying and responding will help develop key interaction skills.
- Provide reasons to communicate whenever you can. Leave gaps for them to fill and provide choices for them to communicate. 'Ready, steady.....' games are great for this, and holding out and labelling a choice of two snacks or toys is a good way to encourage communication.
- Support good listening skills, for example:
  - Being outside and stopping to label what you can hear.
  - Clapping syllables of names and words.



Encourage whole body listening, providing sensory support such as fiddle toys if needed.

## Relationships and Well-being



Relationships and well-being are at the centre of any successful transition. Many children and their families will be feeling anxious about what to expect and the more that we can provide security and reassurance, the better our emotional wellbeing. Building trusting relationships with new adults and children, who understand our needs, value our strengths and show interest in our favourite things will give children a sense of belonging and security. By showing them what to expect and how to enjoy it, they will be able to develop trust and enjoy the next stage of their learning.

Support this by:

- Helping your child to develop the communication skills they need to be able to label and express their emotions. The adults in their new setting will be learning how to understand them.
- Helping your child to prepare for their new school day by putting in place regular routines with visual supports. The new setting will be adjusting their routines and environment to welcome them.
- Helping your child to play, share and take-turns so that they can look forward to making new friends. The new setting will be putting in place support to help them with this if they find it difficult.
- Helping your child to know what to expect by looking at simple social stories with them. These will show them what their classroom will be like, what things will be the same, what things will be different and what they need to try and do. Most importantly it will reassure them that it will be fun and that they will be going home at the end of the day.

## Useful strategies to support children, using some play therapy approaches

Ideas to support children on return to their school or setting:	What this might look like in practice: <b>All provision must be fully risk-assessed.</b>
<p><b>Non-verbal communication; allowing silence; tuning in:</b></p> <p>Some children may seem quieter than before lockdown. It is important that we tune it to their individual needs, allowing silence, but staying aware of any concerning behaviour or signs of withdrawal. It is ok to be quiet. If a child is deeply absorbed in their play, it is important to allow time before we speak, so that their creative process has space to continue and reach a natural pause; this way we are on their level and attuned.</p>	<p>If we are on a child's level, we may notice their non-verbal communication. We need to be aware of speaking for, or over the child, and using more words than necessary. If we can be comfortable with silence, the child will learn to be as well. We can model calm, open body language, and use our facial expression as well as our words to show that we are listening and noticing.</p>
<p><b>Mirroring:</b></p> <p>When feelings are too difficult to put in to words, adults can provide a safe space for a child to express themselves nonverbally. By mirroring a child's actions, sounds, or movements, they may feel seen, valued and understood.</p>	<p>Mirroring can be done with most mediums, e.g. puppets, small world, malleable materials, sensory play, musical instruments, and movement. Be on child's physical level where possible, repeating their sounds, actions or movements, and pausing before continuing. Notice what the child (or puppet, etc.) does next.</p>
<p><b>Noticing and reflecting:</b></p> <p>When we notice and reflect back exactly what we have seen, the child is more able to understand for themselves how they are feeling, and what they are trying to say.</p>	<p>If a child draws, makes marks, builds or paints, for instance, it can help to comment on exactly what we see, rather than ask, or make assumptions about what it is,  </p> <p>e.g., 'I see a yellow blob, and you went round and round, and I notice lots of splashes at the top...could you tell me more?' This way we might find a story emerges.</p>
<p><b>Same resources, presented differently:</b></p> <p>Children have missed many weeks of school or nursery, and many will be excited to be back. It will be important to have most areas the same, to help children feel secure and not to confuse them. However, when the same toys and resources are presented differently, there can be fresh ideas and new stories can emerge.</p>	<p>Resources such as small world play could be presented differently, e.g. in individual trays, or in quiet, sectioned off spaces. Here, a child might create their 'world', perhaps unconsciously, and a story might unfold. In this safe space, a child has a chance to explore their life experiences symbolically, at a distance from reality, making it easier to see, feel and understand.</p>
<p><b>The power of stories:</b></p> <p>Stories, symbolic and imaginative play allow a child the opportunity to explore their life experience safely, at a 'dramatic' distance.</p>	<p>Adults joining in the child's play, and staying within the 'story', convey that what they are seeing is valued. As problems are solved through story, there may be a sense of hope and resolve that transfers to real life.</p>
<p><b>The power of sensory play and malleable materials:</b></p> <p>When we use the sense of touch, through sensory materials, we connect with a 'felt sense'; we may connect with embodied memories, and our emotions. These can be buried deep within our unconscious and may surprise us when they surface. A child might simply find they can release energy through these materials, without the need to talk. Another time, a story might emerge as they form the materials. Being witnessed, or mirrored, by a trusted, attuned adult during this creative process, a child might find themselves connecting to feelings and remembering experiences that they may or may not want to share.</p>	<p>Sensory materials, and opportunities for open-ended, 'messy' play, can provide children with a way of connecting with deep feelings that go beyond words. As we allow them to explore, particularly with their sense of touch, perhaps with clay, paint, shaving foam, slime, etc., they may be re-creating the 'mess' that they have experienced or witnessed in their home life. Using the approaches above, such as mirroring, open ended comments rather than questions, and allowing silence, will all support the child to use the materials as they need. If a child begins to make figures and shapes, and it feels appropriate, adults might comment on what they see first, and then ask 'I wonder what's happening there? It sounds like a story...what happens next?' Alternatively, clay figures, for instance, can be used as 'puppets', allowing a conversation to take place.</p>