

Clothes and Fastenings



One area of independence is when kids learn to dress themselves. Many parents have questions about when kids learn to get dressed on their own, how to help their child in this area of self-care, and what might be stopping their child when there are difficulties. Here are a few strategies and ideas to get you started.

10 Days to Conquer Clothes Fastenings

Completing clothing fasteners independently depends on a lot of factors. Kids need to have adequate grasping skills and hand strength to pinch and pull zippers, buttons, and buckles.

They need to demonstrate dexterity and visual motor integration to coordinate the movements with their hands. And they need to have adequate bilateral coordination skills to be able to use both hands together to bring the two parts of the fasteners together efficiently.

Each day, your child can complete the fun and simple activities or exercises, getting him closer and closer to their goal!

Day 1

- 1 - POP SMALL BUBBLE WRAP WITH FINGERS FOR 5 MINUTES.
- 2 - MAKE A TOWER OF 30 LEGOS. TAKE THEM APART ONE BY ONE.

Day 2

- 1 - PULL OFF 20 SMALL PIECES OF TAPE AND STICK ONTO THE TABLE. PULL EACH PIECE OFF ONE BY ONE.
- 2 - PINCH PLAY DOUGH OR PUTTY WITH THUMB, FIRST FINGER, AND SECOND FINGER 20 TIMES.

Day 3

- 1 - PRACTICE STRINGING BEADS OR LACING CARDS FOR 10 MINUTES.
- 2 - TEAR COLORFUL PAPER INTO SMALL PIECES AND MAKE A MOSAIC.

Day 4

1 - PICK UP 20 CRAFT POMPOMS, FEATHERS, OR OTHER MANIPULATIVES USING A CLOTHESPIN AND PLACE INTO A BOWL.

2 - CUT A SLIT IN THE TOP OF AN EMPTY PLASTIC CONTAINER. PUSH 20 PENNIES THROUGH THE SLIT INTO THE CONTAINER.

Day 5

1 - MAKE A TOWER OF 30 LEGOS. TAKE THEM APART ONE BY ONE.

2 - PINCH PLAY DOUGH OR PUTTY WITH THUMB, FIRST FINGER, AND SECOND FINGER 20 TIMES.

Day 6

1 - PRACTICE STRINGING BEADS OR LACING CARDS FOR 10 MINUTES.

2 - PULL OFF 20 SMALL PIECES OF TAPE AND STICK ONTO THE TABLE. PULL EACH PIECE OFF ONE BY ONE.

Day 7

1 - CUT SLITS IN A PIECE OF FELT OR OTHER FABRIC. PRACTICE PLACING A LARGE BUTTON THROUGH THE SLITS 20 TIMES.

2 - WITH CLOTHING OFF OF THE CHILD'S BODY, ENGAGE THE ZIPPER AND HAVE HER PRACTICE PULLING IT UP AND DOWN 10 TIMES.

Help your little one work up to completing clothing fasteners more independently with this 10 Day to Conquer Clothes fastenings.

Day 8

- 1 - WITH CLOTHING OFF OF THE CHILD'S BODY, PUSH LARGE BUTTONS HALFWAY THROUGH BUTTON HOLES AND HAVE THE CHILD HELP PULL THEM THE REST OF THE WAY THROUGH. PRACTICE 10 TIMES.
- 2 - WITH A BELT OFF OF THE CHILD'S BODY, PRACTICE UNBUCKLING WITH ASSISTANCE 10 TIMES.

Day 9

- 1 - WITH CLOTHING OFF OF THE CHILD'S BODY, PRACTICE ENGAGING THE ZIPPER (PUTTING THE END INTO THE ZIPPER PULL) HAND OVER HAND 10 TIMES.
- 2 - WITH CLOTHING OFF OF THE CHILD'S BODY, PRACTICE ZIPPERS, BUTTONS, AND BUCKLES WITH ASSISTANCE.

Day 10

- 1 - WITH CLOTHING OFF OF THE CHILD'S BODY, PRACTICE ZIPPERS, BUTTONS, AND BUCKLES INDEPENDENTLY.
- 2 - TRY ZIPPERS, BUTTONS, AND BUCKLES INDEPENDENTLY ON CLOTHING WHILE WEARING THEM!

Due to modern advances with clothing and fastenings e.g. Velcro instead of laces or buckles and generally more stretchy, looser materials, children no longer necessarily have the opportunity to practice skills such as tying shoelaces



Socks

- Place socks partly over your child's foot, then encourage them to perform the last part.
- Sport tubular socks are easier than those with a heel.
- Socks with coloured heels and toes also make it easier to work out the correct way round. Alternatively mark the back of the sock with thread on the inside, top edge.
- Make sure that the elastic is not too tight, avoid tight fitting socks.
- Prompt your child to use their "magic thumbs" to help pull the socks on. i.e. isolating their thumbs to get them under the socks to pull up.
- Roll down the top of the sock to make it easier to get the foot in. Use a loop on the back of the sock for the child to hold as they pull them up.



Shoes

- On the inside of the shoes and pumps, mark the inside border of each piece of footwear with indelible ink.
- The child can then place these two marks together to ensure that the correct foot is inserted into each shoe.



Coat

There are many different strategies, but this one is quite effective. Drape the coat over the back of a chair with the lining facing outwards and the sleeves freely hanging. The child stands with their back to the lining and puts each arm in turn into the sleeves. The child bends down to get the coat onto the shoulders and then moves up and away to release the coat.



Fastenings

Buttons

- Start practicing with larger, flat buttons and then progressing to smaller ones. Ensure that the buttonhole is large enough for the button.
- Only undo the top few buttons when taking off a shirt/blouse, and then remove the garment over the head. It can be put on over the head and only a few buttons will need to be done up.
- Choose trousers or skirts with elastic waist bands if buttons and buckles are difficult.
- Velcro can be used instead of buttons, e.g. on a coat/shirt use Velcro and sew buttons on to top flap.
- Try leaving the cuff buttons done up. Alternatively sew a piece of elastic or a button attached with elastic thread across the cuffs so that it can be stretched open when the hand is pushed through.
- Allow your child to do up those which they can see (e.g. at the bottom of a shirt). Start the task if necessary but then allow your child to finish e.g. pull the button through. Replace frequently used buttons with smaller ones (e.g. on coat or cardigan) as these will be easier to do up and a good place to start. large, textured or sewn slightly above the surface of the garment. Be sure buttonholes are large enough for buttoning ease (cut to make slightly larger of shirts).



Zips

When buying a coat with an open-ended zip, test the zip thoroughly as the ease of fastening can vary a lot.

• Attach a key ring or curtain ring to the zip to aid grip.

• Talk through each stage of the task in terms of what the next step is – ‘find the button’, ‘open the hole’, ‘push it through’, ‘grab it’.

• Buttonholes on new shirts are often tight and may need snipping slightly to open them up or just stretching by pushing the button through and back repeatedly.

General Principles of Self Dressing

- **Ensure that your child is sitting in a stable position, e.g. on the floor (where it is easier for children to reach their feet) or sitting on a chair or firm bed with his or her feet supported. If sitting balance is poor, try sitting against a wall. Some children may sit better in a corner where both walls give added support. Alternatively stand against a wall.**
- **Sit next to, in front of, or directly behind your child during activity and guide him or her through the task.**
- **Undressing is usually easier than dressing. Dress in front of the mirror to provide visual cues and use to check all is correct before going out.**
- **Start with undressing. Undressing before bed and helping to put on pajamas is a good time to start as you have more time at night than in the morning.**
- **Follow a consistent sequence and technique when dressing:**

Clothes can be placed in a pile in the order in which they need to be put on

Follow the same technique for each garment, e.g. t-shirt is put over the headfirst and then the arms are put through the sleeves.

The order and technique can be written down so that it can be followed by other carers and school staff. You could use pictures as a visual prompt to help your child remember the clothing order/technique.

- **Describe actions and parts of the body as you are helping your child to dress, e.g. ‘put right foot in,’ ‘now stand up whilst I pull your trousers up your legs.’**
- **Instead of automatically correcting a mistake, get your child to look (maybe in a mirror) and feel if all is correct.**
- **Try to avoid fastenings, tight clothes, and lots of layers. Instead use loose fitting clothing, e.g. tracksuits, sweatshirts. Use clothes with wide neck and arm holes to make it easier to locate these. Initially it may be easier to practice with clothing a size too big.**

Sometimes there are sensory triggers which affect whether a child will or will not get dressed (or undressed)! Sensory triggers for dressing are found below as well as some behaviours that you may see as a result:

TOUCH

Sleeves - Some children have a preference for short sleeves, others prefer long sleeves and others prefer no sleeves.

Seams - Some children are intolerant to certain seams on clothing. This may be on socks, shirts, pants, singlets, underwear.

Clothing tags

Bindings in clothing (elasticized cuffs, waistbands, smocking details)

Stiff clothing (jeans)

Texture and type of material (cotton vs wool vs nylon etc.) - Some children prefer highly textured clothing and other prefer breathable materials.

Length of clothing (length of hems on skirts, length of socks)

Items of clothing that touch the head (hats, beanies, goggles)

Shoes (closed in shoes, sections between toes, height of shoe on legs, sandals which expose toes to other sensory experiences, preference for being barefoot)

Sensory Considerations for Dressing!



Weight" of clothing - Some children will be sensitive to how much effort is involved in putting on clothing (e.g. denim vs cotton).

Body awareness -Some children will have difficulty aligning clothing with body position (e.g. placing leg in leg hole of pants).

Finishing touches - Some children will have difficulty with tucking in their shirts, pulling up zippers, doing up buttons.

Clothing position - Some children will have difficulty orienting clothing (front/back) or noticing clothing is twisted.

Clothing size - Some children will have difficulty noticing clothing is too small or too big.

Any Questions Please contact our OT Team at

Strathmore.

