

Let me: dress myself



Childrens Occupational Therapy Service
Bridge Park Plaza
Bridge Park Road,
Thurmaston
Leicester
LE4 8PQ
Tel: 0116 295 2495

What is this leaflet about?

The Children's Occupational Therapy Services team helps children live more productive and enjoyable lives. This helps them become more independent in the things they need and want to do. This leaflet provides general advice for parents and carers whose children experience difficulties with learning to get dressed and undressed.

Where to begin

Dressing is a complex skill. Most children are not fully independent for many years, and require lots of opportunity to practise.

- A good starting point is undressing as it is easier to learn than dressing.
- Your child is more likely to feel positive about undressing and dressing if the experience is fun.
- Remember to praise your child's efforts and ensure that your child ends each session with a success.
- The use of a reward system such as a star chart may keep your child interested. Stars can be awarded each time your child helps with their dressing activity. At the end of the week, stars collected can be exchanged for a fun reward, for example the opportunity to play with a certain game or toy.

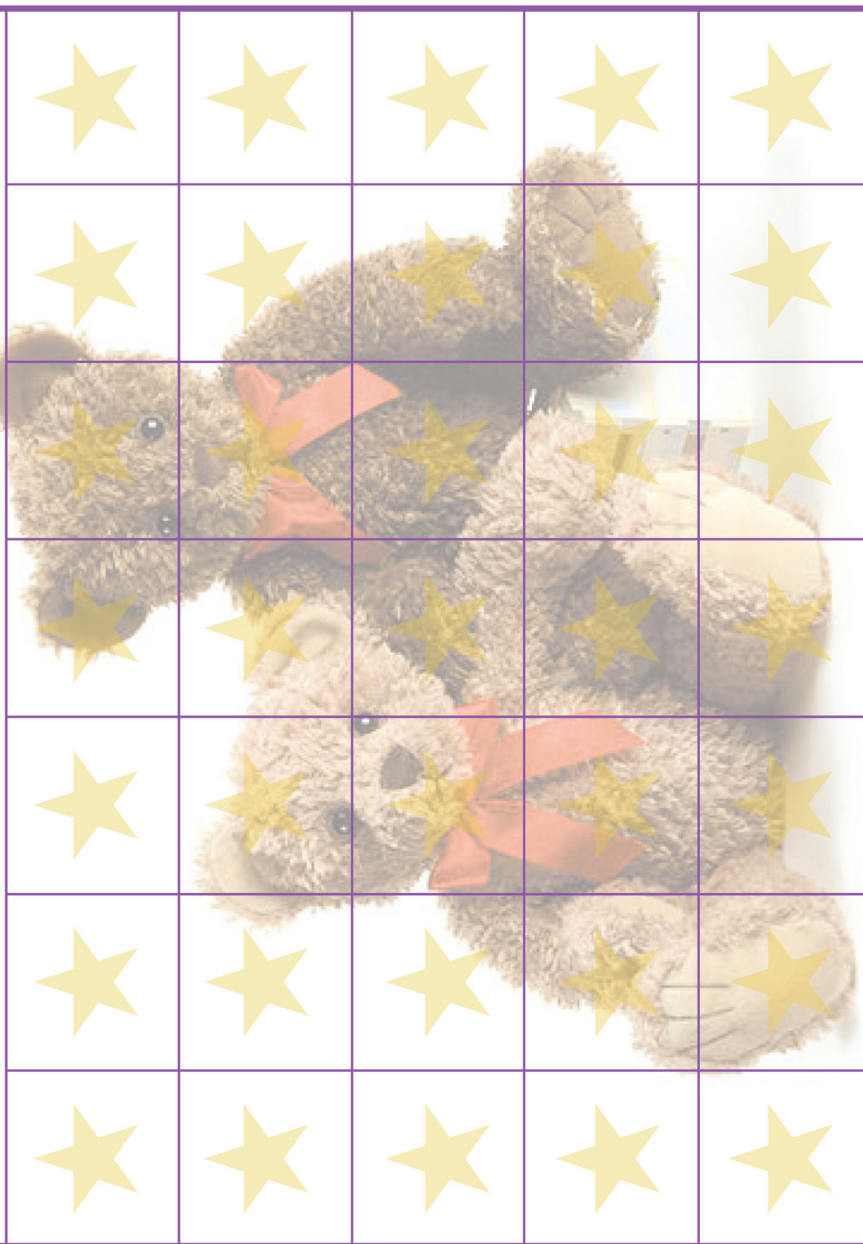
Supporting success

Always let your child complete the very last stage of a task, giving them the opportunity to always end in success. As children develop confidence and skills, they can "take over" earlier in the dressing sequence. This is known as "backwards chaining". For example putting on a top has several steps in the sequence:

1. Getting the top the correct way around
2. Placing and pulling it down over the head
3. Placing one arm through the sleeve
4. Placing the other arm through the sleeve
5. Pulling the top down

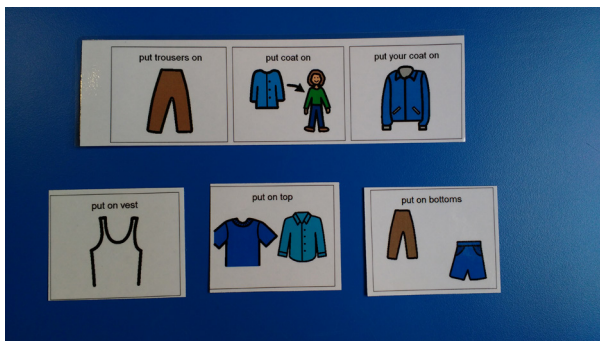
Using the backward chaining method, your child would learn step five first, then learn the other steps backwards, through steps four to one. Backwards chaining can be used with all items of clothing and ensures success for your child.

Dressing chart



Tips for helping learn dressing skills

Use pictures to show the correct order for dressing.



Teach that labels usually go at the back.



Practise with larger clothes that are easier to put on.



Tips for helping learn fastening skills

Demonstrate step-by-step how to fasten buttons.



Practise with large buttons first.



Break down tasks, for example, when learning zip fastening, you might put the two ends together before the child pulls-up the zip. Fix an extra ring or zip tag to help the child to hold it.



Sensory strategies for dressing

Here are some tips which may help if your child doesn't like the feel, look or smell of clothes.

- Use comfortable clothes. Consider the type of fabric and length of sleeves that would be most appropriate for your child.
- If your child does not like the feeling of labels, cut them out.
- If your child does not like the feeling of seams, wearing soft undergarments may help.
- Try washing clothes in unscented products if your child is sensitive to the smell of your chosen washing powder.
- Dressing in front of a mirror lets your child see what they are doing, which might help them coordinate their movements.

How to make practise fun

Have a dressing-up box which includes:

- Loose fitting clothing
- Adult clothing with a variety of fastenings
- Children's clothes with bigger buttons, Velcro and zips
- Role-play clothing
- Shoes, hats, ribbons, gloves, bags and other accessories

Dress dolls so that your child can practise fastenings whilst being able to see what they are doing.

Encourage your child to race against the clock (or egg timer) to get ready faster. A reward could be given when successful.

If your child cannot put-on clothes in the right order

- Start with the same item of clothing each time (for example always socks first, then pants, then vest) and encourage your child to start with the same arm or leg each time.
- Encourage your child to help get-out the clothing that is needed each day.
- Place pictures or photos of your child's clothes in sequence order.
- Your child can then turn over each picture once they put-on that item.

Where to practise dressing

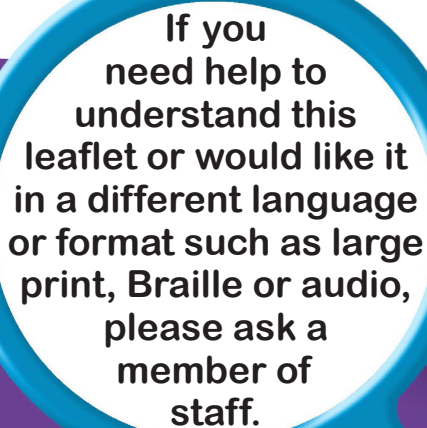
Practising where there are few distractions and interruptions is best (for example, in a quiet room with the television turned off).

- At school your child may benefit from being allowed extra time to change in a quiet space, otherwise the experience can be too noisy and rushed.
- Sitting down on a small stool can help children to focus if they have reduced balance or co-ordination.

When to practise dressing

Practise when your child is not distracted or tired.

- Think about practising after school or at weekends when you may be less rushed.
- Have a routine that allows plenty of time for practise.



**If you
need help to
understand this
leaflet or would like it
in a different language
or format such as large
print, Braille or audio,
please ask a
member of
staff.**

Date implemented: February 2017
Last reviewed: June 2020
Review date: June 2022
Leaflet No. 419 - Edition 2
Replaces : CTD0209