

## Starting school



# Independence

Being independent with basic needs such as feeding themselves, managing clothing and age appropriate hygiene needs will help your child to feel confident when they start school. At home, you can support your child with practicing these skills. This could include pouring themselves a cup of water using a jug, using the toilet by themselves, being able to wash their own hands, being able to get dressed and putting on their own coat.

Take a look at our tops tips for encouraging your child's independence.

### 1. Break it down

Talk through what you would like your child to do, breaking it down into small sections. For example, a task such as putting on your shoes and socks can be broken down into several different instructions.

### 2. Different ways to learn

Some children will find it easier to learn how to do something by being shown rather than just being given a verbal instruction. For example, you could wash your hands next to your child and talk through what you are doing. This will help your child see exactly what they need to do for effective hand hygiene.

### 3. Practice makes perfect!

As adults we never master a skill first time, it takes practice and for children it's no different! Provide your child with lots of opportunities to master a new skill, standing by to offer support until they can do this independently. Try and be patient and avoid the temptation to jump in and take over.

### 4. Problem solve together

Encouraging your child to think through a task will support them in being able to do things for themselves. For example, if your child is putting their feet into the wrong shoes, instead of saying "That's the wrong foot" you could ask, "Does that shoe feel comfortable on that foot? Have a look and see how you could make it feel better." This approach supports their independence, confidence and problem-solving skills.

## 5. Use labeled praise

You'll want to praise your child when they try or master a new skill and using labelled praise can support their self-esteem and willingness to 'have a go'. For example, instead of saying "well done", tell them what you are praising them for; "Well done for trying to do your shoes by yourself, I can see you were trying really hard."

## 6. Work together

Make sure everyone in the house knows you are supporting your child's independence. For example, older siblings or grandparents might think they are helping by popping your child's shoes on for them. However, if you let them know that you are encouraging your child to do things for themselves, they will enjoy helping them learn together.

## 7. Extend skills through activities

Each self-help skill that you support your child with can be extended and enhanced through a play activity. For example, if your child is working towards using a jug to pour a drink, add jugs to the bath at bath time for your child to fill and pour with. This will enhance their skills through play and support their confidence



# Dress up challenge



**This getting ready game will help your child think about what they'll need to take to school and help them manage their own clothing.**

Lay out some clothes for your child and explain that we are going to practice getting dressed by ourselves. Encourage your child to try managing their own clothing, talking through anything they find tricky and support them with solving the problem themselves. Next, encourage your child to think what they might need to add to their outfit if it was a stormy day? What about a sunny day? You could set a timer and see if your child is able to beat the clock to get ready!

Why not also teach your child this easy way to put their coat on by themselves?

- Lay your coat or jacket on the floor in front of you with the lining of the jacket showing and the sleeves fully extended towards the base of the coat
- Make sure you stand at the collar end of the coat and squat down to the coat bending your knees. Insert your left arm downwards into the left sleeve and the right arm downwards into the right arm sleeve as far as they can go
- In one swift motion lift the arms over your head and stand up straight so that the jacket can slip down your arms and then falls into place around your body





# Tea party

**This fun activity will help your child in managing many of the skills that they will need for lunchtime at school.**

Have a tea party at home with your child where they are the host! This could be a tea party for their toys or for the family.

Encourage your child to prepare some food for their tea party, for example would they like to make wraps or sandwiches? Support your child in using a knife to spread the butter or filling. Ask your child to place some crisps or fruit in a bowl with a spoon so they can serve their guests.

Invite your child to set out the tea party for their guests; what cutlery and crockery will they need? Can they pour each guest a drink?





# Hand washing song

**Making up your own song together will help your child understand the importance of washing their hands.**

When washing your hands together, explain that the time it takes to wash their hands is the time it takes to sing 'Happy birthday' twice! Invite your child to make up their own handwashing song to the tune of 'Happy birthday' here are some ideas...

**Wash your hands now, scrub scrub,  
Wash your hands now, scrub scrub,  
Wash your hands now scrub scrub,  
Until they are clean!**

**Use the soap and water,  
Use the soap and water,  
Use the soap and water,  
And then use the towel!**

**What ideas can your child think of for lyrics?**

