

Children's Occupational Therapy

Dressing Activity Sheet

Tips for dressing

Child's name:



Forward training

This means that the child starts the task, e.g., putting on sock and adult helps with later stages the child cannot achieve.

The child needs to be motivated to begin this themselves.



Backward chaining

Here the adult begins the task with the child only doing the last step. Gradually the adult does less so the child has to perform more steps. This way the child always has the reward of finishing the task, e.g., adult picks up jumper, places over the child's head, helps put arms through, but the child pulls it down. Always go at the child's pace and give lots of positive feedback.

Types of clothing

- Use 'loose fitting' lightweight clothing. Avoid lots of layers and difficult fastenings.
- Use wide neck holes and wide sleeves to make it easier to locate these. Cuffs can be elastic or have a button attached with elastic thread, so it stretches open when put on.

- Use elastic waistbands on trousers and shirts if buttons and buckles are difficult.
- Velcro / zips can be used instead of buttons or buckles, e.g., on a coat, use Velcro and sew buttons on the top flap.
- To avoid shoelaces, velcro fastening or slip on shoes can be worn initially.

Some problems encountered

Poor balance

Suggestions:

Sit the child on a bed or chair with their feet supported or sit them on the floor if it is easier for them to reach their feet in this way, instead of bending down. Alternatively sit them against a wall or in the corner of the room or standing with the wall or a chair for support.



Child not gripping clothes to pull on

Suggestions:

Use adult's hand over the child's hand to grip underneath adult's fingers. Roll up clothing to create 'more' to grip, e.g., roll up edge of jumper before putting up. Put elastic around the cuffs or waist to ease gripping.

Use quoits (large toy rings) - place them over arms / legs as a game, pulling them off with the other hand. Use hoops to step into and pull up over the body.

Child loses arm and head holes

Suggestions:

Lay clothes flat in front of the child with arms showing. Place arms into garment first so they can't be lost. Then put head in.

Child puts clothes on inside out

Suggestions:

Use contrasting linings - different colours and textures from outside to inside. Use contrasting sleeve linings from the rest of the lining. Draw child's attention to clothes that are the wrong way round. Use labels inside clothes. Wear t-shirts and sweatshirts that have a picture on the front.

Child puts on clothes back to front

Suggestions:

Lay garment flat down on table or floor, front down. With bottom edge rolled up to give a good grip and to reveal a special mark on the inside, bottom, front.

To indicate the front of the garment. There can be a different mark on the back. Use patches of material or different textures for front and back and right and left sides.

Child twists sock heel to front of foot

Suggestions:

Do not use tight socks. Use marked, coloured toes and heels. Use loop on back edge of sock for child to hold as they pull up sock. Mark top of sock with ribbon threaded through.



Child finds buttons difficult

Suggestions:

It is easier to do up and undo buttons on someone else's clothes. Start with larger buttons, working down to smaller ones. Use pockets with rewards inside. Practice out of dressing times. Child needs to be able to use a pinch grasp before starting buttoning skill development.

Suggestions on how to improve fastening buttons

- Start with large buttons and progress to smaller ones.
- Use backward chaining to teach the skill - e.g., start with the last part of the task first - child pulls button through buttonhole that you have pushed through first.
- Encourage general fine motor development, e.g., picking up small items and posting them into holes.
- To reduce initial frustration replace buttons with Velcro fastenings until the skill is learnt.
- Add elastic to buttons at cuff so button can remain buttoned while sleeve is slipped on / off.
- Buttons are easier to grip if flat or textured. Be sure buttons and buttonholes are large enough for buttoning ease.
- Teach buttons first at the front, then side and then back.
- Give direction slowly, clearly. Demonstrate first to guide the child, then allow independent practice. Intervene if they are frustrated or else they will lose motivation.
- Emphasise verbal directions; through push in, pull out.