

Dressing

Learning to dress is a skill that children need to master. It takes time and practice. Here are some activities that not only help children learn about dressing and caring for their clothes, but also help other aspects of their development.

Where's your hat?

From six months – it may seem strange, but children usually learn how to dress by undressing first. Once a baby has started to pull off their hat, it can be turned into a game – where's your hat?

How this activity helps your child:

Movement: this activity strengthens to help the baby's arm and hand movements.

Co-ordination and balance: this is great for helping co-ordinate movements while maintaining balance.

Language development: this activity is good for language development because it helps them learn to associate the word "hat" with an object and also introduces the concept of "where".

Socks off!

18 months plus – from around a year, most children start to pull off their socks and are excited to find their previously hidden toes. While annoying if you are out shopping, it is an important movement that they need to practise to make progress with dressing. As each sock is pulled off, talk about its colour, texture and length.

How this activity helps your child:

Movement: this activity is good for helping your child to develop their hand skills.

Co-ordination and balance: while your child may sometimes topple backwards when they pull, this activity will help with their balance.

Mathematics: this activity will help your child notice differences between things.

Next step: encourage your child to pull up their socks once you have put them over their toes.

Find the shoes!

From two-and-a-half-years – by around two years, most children are able to collect their shoes and depending on the style will attempt to put them on. It is worth encouraging children to practise putting shoes on when you are not in a rush. Put out three or four different colours and styles of shoes in a pile. See if your child can find theirs and also sort out the others into pairs. Encourage them to try on different pairs of shoes to practice their skills.

How this activity helps your child:

Movement: this activity helps your child's hand skills as they pick up shoes.

Mathematics: this activity will help your child's matching skills. You can also use the language of "pairs".

Language: this activity will help your child learn to follow simple instructions and also learn to follow simple words such as "match", "pair", "fit".

Buttons

From three years – from around three years, you should find that your child can bring up a zip on a coat, push down elasticated trousers and cope with a simple top. Buttons though, will need lots of practise. Begin by attaching a large button to some elastic. Cut some large slits into a sheet of paper. See if your child can push the button through the slit. Once your child can do

this, make the slit slightly smaller and so your child will have to make more fiddly movements. Then find some smaller buttons.

How this activity helps your child:

Co-ordination: this activity will help hand eye co-ordination and will help develop a grip that is needed in handwriting.

Mathematics: this activity will help your child learn about size in a practical way.

Next step: practise this on all clothes that have buttons or toggles.

Front and back!

From around three years – many children walk around with their jumpers or their underwear back to front. It is therefore worth taking the time to show your child that clothes have a back and a front. You can do this by showing them the label or seam at the back of their clothes. You can also make it a game where you put out a pile of clothes and take it in turns to find the back of the clothes.

How this activity helps your child:

Movement: picking up and manipulating clothes will help your child's arm and hand movements.

Language: this activity will help your child learn the words "back" and "front".

Confidence and independence: this activity will help your child gain confidence and independence as they begin to know which way round their clothes go and that they can do this on their own.

Next step: see if your child can identify when clothes are inside out. Put a few clothes, some inside out, and see if your child can spot them. You could do this when you sort out the washing.

Folding clothes

From four years – learning to fold clothes neatly is a useful skill that requires good hand-eye co-ordination. It is also great for children's mathematics. Start off with tea towels or anything that is square or rectangular. Show how the corners are put together before smoothing the fabric at first, see if your child can get used to folding things in half. T-shirts and trousers work well to begin with as well. You could do this when you sort the ironing pile.

How this activity helps your child:

Movement: this activity is great to help your child's hand skills.

Mathematics: this activity can help your child develop the concept of "half" and "quarter".