



5 Tips to Help Your Child Get Dressed By Themselves

YOUTUBE FREEBIE

Getting dressed every day is a life skill, and something that many children struggle with. Working on the underlying skills necessary for self-dressing is just as important as the actual task of getting dressed!

Try these tips to help your child build the skills required for self-dressing!

1 USE AN OBSTACLE COURSE

Set up an obstacle course with balance beams, tunnels, etc.

Place different clothing items along the way for your child to put on before moving through the next step of the obstacle course.

- In the winter, use snow gear (gloves, goggles, boots, etc.).
- Increase the challenge by having your child put items on while they're eyes are closed.
- Turn it into a relay race with several teams.

Watch [this YouTube video](#) for ideas on how to set up an obstacle course.

2 PRACTICE LOWER BODY DRESSING

During play, you can have your child practice lower body dressing (pants, socks, etc.) with items that are not clothing! This builds the skills of bilateral coordination and balance.

- For pants: use an exercise band that is tied in the middle, so there are two loops. Practice stepping into each loop and pulling them up, then back down and stepping out (just like pants!).
- For socks: use ponytails to simulate socks! You can do this one standing or sitting down.

Complete these activities as part of an obstacle course, as a race to see who finishes first, or any other way that is fun and motivating!

3 DOLLS AND STUFFED ANIMALS

Use your child's dolls or stuffed animals to practice dressing skills and improve body awareness.

- Identify different body parts on the doll / animal and match it to your child's body parts. Using a mirror is helpful!
- Talk about where different clothing items go. Ask questions such as, "Where does your shirt go?" or "Do your pants go on your arms or your legs?"
- Then have your child help their dolls / animals get dressed for the day (or into pajamas at night). This helps with sequencing the steps of dressing and can translate to better body awareness for your child.

4

BUTTON BOARDS

As simple as it sounds, using button boards or "busy boards" is a great way to build underlying skills.

- [Melissa and Doug Busy Board](#)
- [Button Game](#)
- [Button Board](#)
- [Dressing Boards](#)

These are great to use during car rides and add them into obstacle courses!

5

FINE MOTOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Going along with #4, building the underlying fine motor skills is a must. In order for your child to successfully pull clothing up / down, manipulate buttons, zippers, snaps, laces, etc., and to manage hats, gloves, and socks, they must develop hand strength and dexterity. Use these activities during play time to build these skills!

- Stringing beads
- Lacing practice
- [Pop-Up Pirate](#)
- Use a sensory bin with vision occluded to develop better coordination of the hands without requiring vision.

BONUS Ideas!

1 IMPROVE BODY AWARENESS

For successful self-dressing, your child needs to understand where their body is and how their body coordinates for tasks. Try these activities to improve body awareness:

- Simon Says
- Obstacle courses that require moving under, over, and through obstacles
- Vibration and / or brushing
- More tactile / messy play activities

2 IDENTIFY TACTILE DEFENSIVENESS

If self-dressing is difficult due to an underlying tactile defensiveness or over-responsiveness, you might need to address this first. If your child cannot tolerate certain types of clothing, identify the types that they enjoy wearing.

Learn more about tactile defensiveness and how it relates to self-dressing by listening to [this podcast](#).
Learn more about the tactile system by reading [this blog post](#).

Want more help?!

[CHECK OUT OUR SENSORY DIET DIGITAL COURSE](#)

This full length digital course teaches you all about sensory diets and how to create a personalized sensory diet for your child (and even for you!).

- What is a sensory diet?
- What are the 8 sensory systems?
- How does sensory processing affect daily life tasks (such as self-feeding)?
- How to identify sensory preferences / sensory needs.
- Sensory activity toolbox.
- And more!

Visit: harkla.co/products/sensory-diet-course