

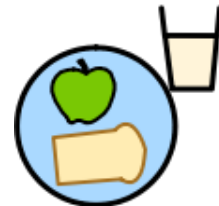
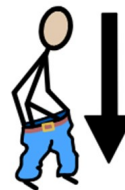
GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills

This sheet is part of a series of Information Sheets designed to provide parents / carers with advice and information on supporting children with Special Educational Needs and / or a Disability to get ready for Nursery or Reception class at school. The focus of this information sheet is to support skills of independence such as undressing / undressing and skills relating to lunchtimes at school.

Helping your child with their independence skills will give you reassurance that you are supporting your child to be able to manage aspects of their day such as P.E, putting on their coats for break times and being able to manage lunchtimes. For children with SEND, independence skills will be unique to their individual needs. The aim of your support will be to help them get to their next steps at your child's developmental pace. Skills that may be useful to work on in preparation for school include:

- * Get undressed.
- * Getting dressed.
- * Managing lunch times.



You may have some worries and / or questions about how your child may manage aspects of their school day, especially if your child requires support with their independence skills. There may be many reasons why your child may require additional support with their independence skills. They may have physical and / or sensory needs or may have learning needs which require skills to be taught step by step.



The information in this sheet is designed to provide guidance on how you can support your child in preparation for school by breaking down the skills in order to teach your child their next step in dressing / un-dressing and feeding.

Before thinking about skills to teach, it can be helpful to find out the school's routines for P.E and lunchtimes. Some useful questions to ask are on the next page ~ it can also be useful to share with the school relevant information particularly in relation to your child's feeding needs.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Useful Questions to ask School / Share with School ~ Un / Dressing

You may also have questions or things to share with the school about support your child may need with un / dressing. This information will help you plan which independence skills to practice at home with your child before they start school. Here are some ideas for questions you may wish to ask your child's Class Teacher.



Will my child need to change for P.E. and if so will there be support to help them?

My child has co-ordination difficulties. He will require adult support to help get dressed. Will the school be able to arrange this?

My child uses visuals at home to help them with understanding the routine of dressing. Will you be able to use a visual routine too?

Will you be able to carry out activities that my child's Occupational Therapist / Physiotherapist has recommended?

My child has sensory needs and finds clothing and / or shoes difficult to wear. Is there flexibility with the uniform?

Will there be support available for my child to get changed into their P.E. kit?

Useful Information to share with your child's school

1. Whether your child can un / dress ~ what items of clothing your child can manage themselves and which items they may need help with.
2. Do they have any physical needs either fine or gross motor?
3. Any sensory needs which might affect your child e.g. likes to remove shoes / needs to have buttons done up to the top / refuses to wear a coat etc.
4. Any current or previous involvement from Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy that may be relevant, along with any advice on activities to support your child to develop their independence skills.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ Undressing

How to support your child to become more independent with getting undressed to be ready for school.

For children with SEND, being able to undress themselves is an important step towards independence. Undressing is the best place to start, taking clothing off is easier than putting it on. Begin by tackling one step at a time, give help where needed, practice the steps and have fun.

Backward Chaining

Backward chaining is where you help with all the steps apart from the last one e.g. You take off your child's shoes and pull the sock down over the heel – your child's first task will be to pull his socks off the rest of the way. As he masters each step you can ask them to complete an additional step.



Hand over hand support

Hand over hand support is where you place your hand over your child's hand and gently show them what to do, this will help your child feel the movement and he may try on his own next time. Make sure your child is looking at you, you could gently tap their hand to give sensory input to get their attention. For instance, when pulling Velcro straps to take off shoes, hold your child's fingers in yours, and do the task with them.



Fine and Gross Motor Skills

Encourage your child to take part in fine and gross motor activities at home. Children need fine and gross motor strength and co-ordination to get undressed themselves. Gross motor skills are large movements e.g. Pull their legs out of a pair of trousers and fine motor skills are smaller movements with their hands and fingers e.g. pull down a zip on a coat.



Modelling

Model a simple action on yourself to show your child what you want them to do e.g. Take your own shoe and sock off, **use language** to name clothing, body parts and actions as you go "Shoe off, pull, sock off, pull, I can see my foot, now your turn"

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ Undressing

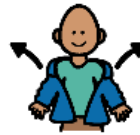
Stage 1

Taking off hats, socks and shoes.



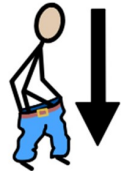
Stage 2

Taking off a front fastening coat or shirt- (Not the fastening)



Stage 3

Pulling down pants, trousers or a skirt with elasticated waists.



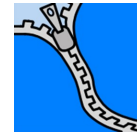
Stage 4

Taking off a T shirt or loose sweat shirt



Stage 5

Undoing fastenings— Velcro, large buttons and zips.



Top Tips for independent undressing

- * Choose a time to practice when you are both relaxed and have plenty of time. Undressing naturally happens at the beginning and end of the day but there are opportunities to practice at toileting times, when going out, or during pretend play.
- * Practice with loose, comfortable clothing before moving on to school uniform.
- * Try to take a step back and let your child have a go but be ready to step in if they begin to get frustrated. Children need challenge but also need to feel success to finish a task.
- * Tackle undressing one step at a time, you may need to practice that step many times before moving on.
- * Sitting your child on a chair, on the floor or leaning up against the bed or sofa will help with balance.
- * Using pictures or photographs may support your child's understanding of what to do.
- * Have fun and give lots of praise, make up silly songs, use a timer on your phone to have a race and use the mirror to laugh at mistakes together.

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ Visuals for Undressing

Pictures to support un/dressing

The pictures on this page can be printed off, laminated and cut out.

They can be shown one at a time as you go through each action or you can place the pictures in the order of un/dressing.

As you show your child the visual, say the name of the action clearly.

As your child removes the item of clothing say the action again e.g. 'shoes off' to reinforce the message.

shoes off



coat off



t-shirt off



t-shirt off



trousers down



skirt down



Don't forget to praise your child's attempts at undressing. If your child needs a bit more time learning a skill, don't worry ~ keep the practice sessions short but frequent.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ Dressing

How to support your child to become more independent with getting dressed in their school uniform to be ready for school.

For children with SEND being able to dress themselves is an important step towards independence. Dressing is a complex activity and success is important. Begin by tackling one step at a time, give help where needed, practice the steps and make it fun.

Forward Chaining

Forward Chaining is where your child completes the first step (e.g. places the T shirt over his head) and then you help them with the following steps to complete the task.

When he has mastered that step add another until he can do it all by themselves with a little help.



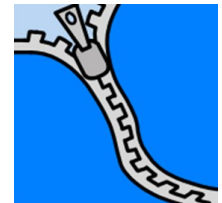
Hand over hand support

Hand over hand support is where you place your hand over your child's hand and gently show them what to do, this will help your child feel the movement and he may try on his own next time. Make sure your child is looking at you, you could gently tap their hand to give sensory input to get their attention. For instance, when putting on shoes, hold your child's hand in yours, and do the task with them.



Fine and Gross Motor Skills

Encourage your child to take part in fine and gross motor activities at home. Children need fine and gross

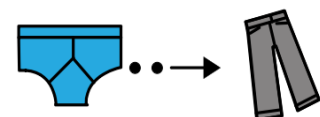
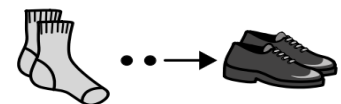


motor strength and co-ordination to get dressed themselves. Gross motor skills are large movements e.g. to be able to lift their leg into a pair of trousers and fine motor skills are smaller elements with their hands and fingers e.g. pull up a zip on a coat.

Learning to get dressed involves a number of movements that need to be broken down into small.

Pictures or photos will help your child to understand which piece of clothing goes on first and maintain attention to finish the task.

Always teach dressing the same way each time so a predictable sequence is repeated making it easier for your child to remember the routine e.g. T Shirt is put over the head first then the arms are put through the sleeves.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ Dressing

Stages of learning to dress from easiest to hardest

Stage 1

*Start with pulling up pants, trousers and tights.
Holding arms up when putting on a T shirt or coat, holding up a foot
to place in a shoe.*



Stage 2

*Putting arms into front fastening shirts, coats and cardigans (without
completing the fastenings).*



Stage 3

*Stepping into loose trousers or skirts with elasticated waists and
pulling them up.*



Stage 4

Putting on shoes with Velcro fastenings.



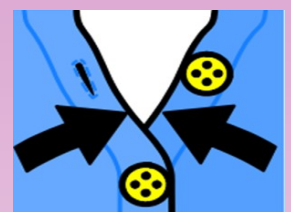
Stage 5

Putting on a T shirt and pulling socks on independently.



Stage 6

Doing-up fastenings – e.g. buttons, zips and Velcro with a little help.



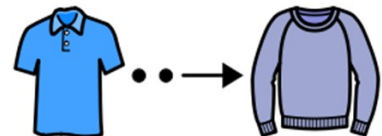
GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ Dressing

Top Tips for independent dressing



- ✓ *If your child is reluctant to get dressed, try wrapping them in a tight towel or giving a massage before dressing to give sensory input before putting clothes on.*
- ✓ *To make things easy choose front fastening dresses / elasticated waists / Velcro, shoes / a coat with a contrasting lining and loosen tight shoes and tops.*
- ✓ *To help remember the front and back of clothing choose underpants and tops with a picture on the front and sew a coloured thread in the back of the garment, if you have taken labels out so they can find the back of clothing easily.*
- ✓ *To help with a firm grip prompt your child to be aware of their thumb, you could say 'Where is magic Thumb?' and get them to give you a thumbs up prior to dressing. Roll up socks and tops to give your child more to grip on to. Choose socks with coloured heels and toes to help to put them on the right way.*
- ✓ *To practice movements for dressing make small circles from soft materials such a toweling or a hair scrunchy for your child to place over their foot or for larger circles to step into to put round their waist. These circles enable them to practice the movements of dressing but without the confusion of lots of material – will require supervision.*
- ✓ *To help with learning the order of putting on clothing, lay the uniform flat on the floor, in the order it is to be put on. Place the end which is to be put on first nearest to your child. Put socks on before trousers as it makes it easier to slip the foot in the leg.*



Useful links / Websites

- <https://www.yourkidsot.com/blog/sensory-considerations-for-dressing>
- https://hrch.nhs.uk/application/files/1616/6600/8649/Dressing_.pdf

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ Visuals for Dressing

Pictures to support dressing

*The pictures on
this page can be
printed off,
laminated and
cut out.*

*They can be
shown one at a
time as you go
through each
action or you
can place the
pictures in the
order of
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*As you show
your child the
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shoes on



coat on



dressed



t-shirt on



trousers up



skirt up



*Don't forget to praise your child's attempts at
dressing. If your child needs a bit more time
learning a skill, don't worry ~ keep the practice
sessions short but frequent.*



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Useful Questions to ask School / Share with School ~ Lunchtimes

Every school will have their own arrangements for lunchtimes, it is a good idea to contact your child's school to find out how lunchtimes are organised. This information will help you plan which independence skills to practice at home with your child before they start school. Here are some ideas for questions you may wish to ask your child's teacher.



Can my child bring a packed lunch from home rather than have school lunch. Can I read the school lunch policy?

My child finds it difficult to sit at mealtimes, can they have a fidget toy to help good sitting? Where will they eat lunch?

My child finds it difficult to use cutlery and to open containers, will there be additional adults around to help them?

What is provided to drink at lunchtime? Do the children pour their own drinks? Can we bring our child's own drinks bottle?

What do you serve the school lunch on, a plate or tray?

My child has sensory needs e.g. dislikes foods touching / picky eating. Will the lunch supervisors know? Can they support my child with this?

Useful Information to share with your child's school

1. Food allergies / Specific dietary / feeding requirements & medication required to manage these if applicable.
2. Sensory needs that may impact on eating and drinking ~ e.g. the foods your child eats, if the food needs to be presented in a particular way, foods your child does not eat, your child's feeding and drinking skills, support or prompting needed or if there are other needs which might affect your child's ability to feed.
3. Involvement from Occupational Therapy / Specialist Feeding Speech and Language Therapy / Dietician / Continuing Care relating to feeding.



If your child has a Care Plan for the management of their food allergy or dietary requirements or a food & drink passport ensure that you have spoken to your child's health care professional and the school to ensure arrangements can be made for any training that staff may need.

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ School Lunchtimes

How can I support my child to become more independent with eating lunch at school?

For children with SEND being able to feed themselves is an important step towards independence. Lunch and snack times at school can be daunting for children for many reasons such as dietary, sensory or social needs. Success is important. Begin by tackling one step at a time, give help where needed, practice the steps and make it fun.

Requesting Help

Being able to request help at lunchtime will give your child confidence – practice using gestures, visuals and/or words to request *help* or to ask for *more* when eating together at home.



Sensory Sensitivities

If your child has limited preferences for food a lunch box may be a good option when starting school.

Include food that you know your child is familiar with and will want to eat ~ try to include healthy options. When they are settled you can introduce some new options they may be more likely to try in the school environment sitting with their friends watching them eat.



Children need **fine motor skills** and strength to feed themselves. These are small movements they do with their hands and fingers e.g. opening a lunch box or using a spoon to eat a yoghurt. Practice fine motor activities by playing with play dough.

They need to develop eye-hand co-ordination to use a spoon to eat a yoghurt without spillages and more complex movements like using cutlery. Reading games are a good way to practice.

School lunchtime can be busy and the expectation is likely to be that your child will sit to have lunch with others. To get ready for this you can **get into a routine** and eat lunch together at school lunch times. If your child has difficulties sitting, allow them to have a fidget toy at the table to motivate them to sit or use as a reward for good sitting.

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ School Lunchtimes

Preparing your child to eat a packed lunch at school

- ✓ *Cut up food into small bite size pieces to make it easy to pick up and eat.*
- ✓ *If you do not already, practice sitting at the table to eat.*
- ✓ *Practice eating food in the right order.*
- ✓ *Make sure your child can open their lunch-box, containers and any wrappers as well as unwrapping a straw on a small drinks carton.*
- ✓ *Have containers with compartments if your child does not like their food 'touching'.*
- ✓ *Develop a routine where you eat a pack lunch with your child at school lunchtime.*
- ✓ *Buy a lunch box with your child's favourite TV character on, it can be a motivator.*



Preparing your child to eat a school lunch

- ✓ *Practice carrying a plate or tray to the table.*
- ✓ *At school, your child may need to make a choice of lunch. Before you make your child lunch at home, you could practice offering a choice of two options.*
- ✓ *Practice using cutlery - start with using a spoon in a yoghurt.*
- ✓ *Encourage independence skills by helping your child to clear their plate and putting it away when finished.*



Useful Links/Websites: <https://hrch.nhs.uk/services/search-services/occupational-therapy-children-hounslow>

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Independence Skills ~ Visuals for Lunchtimes

Pictures to support lunchtimes

The pictures on this page can be printed off, laminated and cut out.

They can be shown one at a time to help your child ask for help or encourage them to request more or open the packaging.

As you show your child the visual, say the name of the action / phrase clearly.

As you and your child are practicing the skills of lunchtime together, take the opportunity to teach new vocabulary such as 'tray', 'packed lunch', 'lunch bag', 'knife', 'fork' etc.

finished



open



more



good sitting



I want



Don't forget to praise your child's attempts at asking for help or communicating with you that they want 'more' or to 'open'.

