

Flush rules

Teach children to be civic-minded while using the loo at home, in school or in public.

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GETTY IMAGES

“A child’s ability to use the school toilet or even the shopping mall toilet is a milestone event marking his assimilation into society.

My seven-month old Aryan knows when it’s nappy changing time – from the moment he catches sight of the bright blue baby wipes, right up to the chorus of Mommy’s ludicrous ‘nappy changing song’, he obediently lifts his legs up to let me clean and dress him.

Changing my son’s diapers may be a routine but it is a highly engaging activity for us to learn new words and to bond. He knows nappy changing time is not play time and he has learnt to cooperate in this messy activity by being still and perhaps yes, even pretending, to enjoy my songs. This also affirms the point that a child is never too young to learn routines.

Early discipline

Recently, a principal of a preschool centre shared with me that some first year students attended her school in pull-up training pants. The principal, Ms Tan, remarked: "When kids wear training pants, they do not know when it is time to 'change'. Parents don't seem to understand that it is very unhealthy for their child to stay in soiled diapers till the school bell rings!"

Another concerned parent emailed our RAS office a few weeks ago informing us that she was disappointed when she saw a bevy of rambunctious, unruly preschoolers misbehaving at the female toilet of a shopping mall. The parent observed that the teacher tried her best but could not get her students to be more disciplined.

The solution to remedy these incidents is good toileting, which requires discipline. And the key to good discipline starts with good routines. Parents need to understand that their child is growing and they need to take advantage of this window of opportunity to instill good toilet routines.

A child's ability to use the school toilet or even the shopping mall toilet is a milestone event marking his assimilation into society. Celebrating such achievements even boosts a child's confidence to be a more responsible public toilet user.

Be prepared


But before you embark on your child's toileting mission, please take some time in getting your child to exercise these 3 basic practices :-

- Always have a full packet of tissue paper in your pocket.
Getting your child to always have a full packet of tissue on hand enables them to wipe off urine-soiled toilet seats. It also helps your child to clean and dry themselves (especially if there's no toilet paper in the school or public toilet) after passing motion or passing urine. Not forgetting, they need to dry their hands with tissue paper after washing their hands.
- The toilet is a place of quiet.
Remind your child that the toilet is a place of quiet. It's not the place to brag about your latest

Nintendo Light score to your friend. Drive the bottom line that talking is minimal and if required at all, talk in whispers. We adults often set bad examples when we take phone calls while in the loo, so we should strive to be role model parents/toilet users for our children to emulate by.

- Do not play in the toilet and be patient while waiting your turn.
Thirdly, remind your children not to play in the toilet. Explain to your child that there should be no sprinkle-water-on-your-face contests while they are in the toilet. As they wait for their turn, you can get your child to quietly hum his favourite nursery rhyme.

If you are a teacher, getting your class to practice this 'toilet mindset' will take a few weeks, depending on your class schedule and timings. If you are a parent, you have a longer timeframe to refine your child's skill. Either way, whether you are a teacher or parent, once your child has reasonably mastered these steps, you can then proceed to the nuts and bolts of proper toileting.

Good toileting, as with any other essential life skill, requires the combined effort of teachers, parents and child minders, including maids. Together, we can all work towards creating an island-state of responsible public toilet users! 

Step-by-step toileting for kids

After entering the toilet, look at the toilet seat. If the toilet seat is soiled, wipe off any drops of urine on the toilet seat with toilet paper.

- Proceed to pass urine or pass motion.
- Wipe yourself clean and dry yourself with toilet paper.
- Wipe off any drops of urine you may have left on the toilet seat.
- Flush thoroughly, making sure all waste is flushed off.
- Wash your hands with soap and water. Dry your hands with tissue paper or the hand dryer before leaving the toilet.

SUSAN PEREIRA is office manager with the Restroom Association (Singapore). Readers can find out more about toilet etiquette or contact the writer at www.toilet.org.sg.