



Fox Wood School OT Ideas



Ideas to assist with development of dressing skills

Please remember that the ideas and activities in this programme will not work for all children as we all respond and react to sensory input differently. Lots of ideas have been provided so that there hopefully will be some ideas that will work for your child.

If you are concerned that any of the activities or tips pose a risk to your child, please do not attempt.

Dressing yourself requires a combination of lots of different skills often without us realising! From tolerating the different clothing textures, seams and smells of washing powder to being able to balance ourselves effectively to control our finger movements.

Children tend to naturally progress through developmental stages in the dressing process and the below may help to work out where your child is at and what stage to work on next.

- Helps with dressing by holding out an arm or pushing their arm through a sleeve.
- They are co-operative in the dressing process.
- Tends to pull their shoes off.
- Takes off shoes, socks, hat but unable to put on themselves.
- Puts on hat and shoes.
- Removes unfastened coat.
- Helps push down garments.
- Finds arm holes in t-shirt.
- Tries to put on socks.
- Undresses loose pull down garments.
- Able to put on shoes without fastening (may be the wrong foot).
- Can pull zips up and down, but unable to start.
- T-shirt on/off independently but may be back to front.
- Pulls up garments independently.
- Dresses and undresses independently but may still need help with small buttons, zips and laces.
- Clothing may still be put on back to front on occasion.



Sensory Considerations

For many of our children they have underlying sensory difficulties and therefore these must be considered in line with developing their dressing skills;

We need to be calm and in the best place for sensory systems to tolerate potentially difficult touch sensations. Encourage deep pressure and resistance based activities prior to dressing;

- Use the 'hot dog' technique rolling them up in a blanket/duvet or sandwich them between cushions/pillows.
- Use a peanut ball or therapy ball and roll it up and down them using firm pressure (do not roll over the head). Get them to do this to you to!
- Give them a big bear hug and tight squeeze, you can use a towel or blanket for additional squeeze if they like this.
- Pushing the wall down with their hands and/or feet.



- Try some of the other activities within Fox Wood's OT Programme to be Just right - http://www.foxwoodschool.org.uk/storage/secure_download/SXlnOG4xaHQ3Y0xPYU5TSmtVZzFvdz09

Tactile/Touch Ideas to help minimise sensitivities

- For children that tend to become very distressed by clothing and strip regularly, consider using base layer garments underneath clothing. This can provide additional calming compression.
- Where there are seams and tags, where clothing inside out if necessary. Cut labels out. Seamless clothing can be purchased. Make sure any raw edges are minimised.
- Be aware that new clothing is likely to be disliked as it feels scratchy and uncomfortable to them. Wash several times before introducing to them.
- Minimise clothing with tight cuffs on the ankles or wrists as these are likely to feel scratchy and difficult to process!
- If your child prefers short sleeves and/or shorts then this can be due to their difficulties with processing touch.



General Principles

- Ensure that they are sitting and well balanced. This can be on the floor, or on a chair where their feet are well supported. Sitting against the wall can be helpful.
- Reduce distractions where possible. This can be overloading for them. Consider whether a mirror is going to be helpful or cause distraction.
- Use big / loose clothing at first.
- Lay out clothing in the correct order and the right way round at first. Utilise clothing with pictures on or bows to help with orientation.
- Follow a consistent routine when you identify which area you are working on. i.e. pulling up trousers every time they toilet/pad change.
- Consider at what point you want to try and encourage them to help, if you are in a rush in the morning before school this is probably not going to work. Perhaps start to work on skills at bedtime and coming home routines when they are calmer.
- Think about where best to position yourself when helping them. Is it better to sit beside them, behind them or in front of them.
- Use songs/music/rhythm to facilitate the process.
- Try using a social story to help them to understand the process.
- Try watching on the internet children getting dressed and/or reading stories about them doing this.

How Best to Teach

There are different techniques to teach dressing;

- **Backward chaining** - this is where the child finishes the last step of the process so they are allowed to achieve each time. As they gain more competence you do less and less.
- **Forward chaining** - the child starts the task but before they become frustrated you finish. This does require the child to be well motivated to start the activity. Praise them for whatever they manage.
- **Hand over hand** - put your hands over the child to help them do the process. Reduce your assistance as they become more proficient.
- **Take turns** - You do the first step and then they do the next.

Visuals That Can Help

- Use picture symbols and picture strips to help your child with sequencing dressing. This can be photos of their clothes if it makes it more real for them.
- Now and next cards.
- Where appropriate you can use a teddy and get them dressed at the same time. To demonstrate steps.

Fastenings

Buttons

- Practice on clothing that is not on them at first! Use big buttons at first.
- To practice use items of clothing that have a button that is different in colour to the clothing so you can see clearly where the button is.
- For polo shirts whilst skills are developing, sew the button over the button hole and put Velcro underneath to fasten.
- Work on buttons that they can see first. Widen the button holes to ensure ease and success.
- Talk through the process - find the button, open the hole, push it through and grab it!



Zips

- When buying a coat for them, make sure the zip is large toothed and is different in colour to the fabric of the coat. Ideally to have Velcro over fastenings in place will help whilst learning.
- Make sure the zip is easy to run up and down and that the fabric does not catch. Fasten a large pull to the zip, this can be a favoured key ring.
- Start first with practising zips on clothing not being worn on them.
- For coats it can help to have a contrasting lining to help with orientation.



Activities That Can Support Dressing

- Work on activities that encourage following instructions with body parts - Hokey Cokey, Simon Says.
- Practice games that encourage dressing in a fun way - dressing up themselves or Mummy, musical dressing up (putting on clothes before the music finishes).
- When painting or cooking encourage them to put on large shirts and attempt fastenings as they are likely to be motivated when they are about to do an activity they like!
- Threading activities are a great way to develop 2 handed skills and the precision required for fastenings. Start with large items to thread with a solid thing to thread onto i.e. a wooden pole, pipe cleaner.
- Utilise dressing bears such as Build a Bears who have clothes that have all fastenings on.

References

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