

# Dressing Tips and Tricks: Preschool Age Children



## Shirts & Pants

- Simulate pulling a shirt and pants up and down on their body:
  - Using a scarf or piece of material, tie the ends together to make a circle. Have your child put the circle over their head and pull/push it down over their body, down to their feet. Then have them pull it back up over their body and finally over their head.
  - Adjust the size of the circle; smaller for a challenge or bigger for easier practice.
- Use oversized shirts so that there is plenty of space to maneuver.
- Practice reaching behind by placing stickers or clothespins in hard to reach places.
- Teach your child to locate the tag first to assist with identifying front vs. back of clothing.



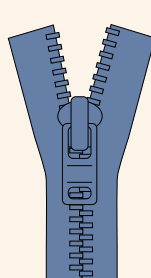
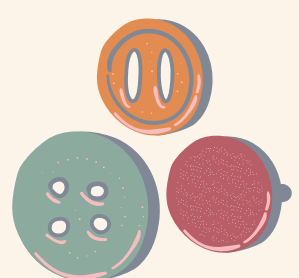
## Socks & Shoes

- Use stretchy play jewelry or scrunchies to practice maneuvering items (up and around) the ankles - this allows for stretching the item open, sliding it over and up their foot, and manipulating over the heel to reach the ankle.
- Start with slippers to learn the movement pattern of putting shoes on - they are typically wider and easier to put on and take off.
- Use visuals to assist with correct orientation and hand placement:
  - Socks with a colored heel.
  - Drawing a face on the inside of the shoe tongue as a reminder to "open" the shoe wide enough.
  - Draw fingers on the inside of the shoe opening so your child knows where to grab and pull.



## Fasteners

- Cut slits in a piece of felt and have your child practice pushing buttons through the slit (or pulling the button out of the slit on the other side) while using the thumb and pointer finger.
- Use fun rhymes to describe the steps while completing the task. For example with buttons you can say:  
"Peek-a-boo, pull it through, then wahoo!"



- Practice with clothing items off the child's body - they can use their own clothes or dress up a stuffed animal or doll.
- Add an extender to your child's zipper using a hair tie or twist tie to make the zipper easier to grasp and manipulate.

## Extra Tips

- Practice dressing when you have time, not when things are rushed or stressful - try bath and bed times as part of your nightly routine, Saturday mornings, or during structured play time.
- Teach the last step first, for example:
  - Help your child get their head through then allow them to independently push their arms through the sleeves and/or pull the shirt down over the stomach.
  - Once mastered teach them the second to last step (putting the shirt over their head).
- Provide visual cards or a story book to assist with understanding the sequence.
- To decrease postural and balance demands during dressing, allow your child to sit down with their back against a wall.
- Be aware of any possible sensitivities or clothing preferences your child may have and try to accommodate. The sensitivity is real.



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