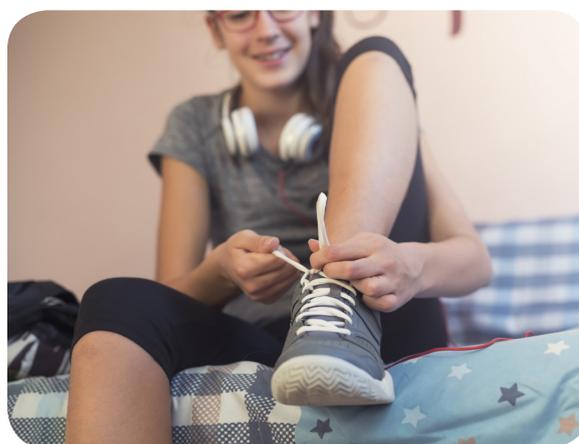


Daily living skills for kids

Top tips for parents and carers

Daily living activities include tasks like: dressing, showering/ bathing, brushing hair, using a knife and fork and using the toilet.

Daily living activities are complex – they require lots of problem solving, sequencing, big and small movements. Encouraging children to join in with these tasks facilitates independence and learning; this sometimes means changing the task or your approach.



Remember!
All motor skills are learned and children learn differently!

The foundations of daily living skills

- **Timing** - allow plenty of time, do not rush. When during the day is best to do your practice? Think about what happens before and after self-care tasks and how to prepare and motivate your child.
- **Environment** - Where are you completing the task, can you minimise distractions?
- **Tools or materials** – can you use items to make the task easier? (Bigger buttons, easy grip cutlery)
- **Ability and awareness** - Think about your child's learning level. Start with small, simple parts of tasks with support, and gradually work from there.
 - Set up the task: put items/equipment in the correct order or support the child to do this with you.
 - Follow a consistent routine or sequence, break the task down into small achievable steps.
 - Encourage good looking and attention to task: can you use a timer to demonstrate how long the task will last? What will happen when it is finished?
 - Use simple communication and the same phrases or questions.
 - Don't forget to check! Encourage looking, checking and correcting mistakes rather than automatically correcting them yourself.
- Use stickers or points for small steps of each task – these can be saved up and work towards a reward.

Have you tried these methods to support learning daily living skills?

Adapting the tools/materials and changing the environment

Could the items used for the task be made more straightforward whilst the child is learning? E.g. cutlery that is easy to grip, looser clothing, bigger buttons.

Can the environment or context be changed to make the task easier? E.g. quieter room, no TV, reorganising where things are kept?

Grading

Breaking the task into small steps and gradually involving the child more over time. It's ok to start very small and provide some support. Keep moving forward with this and encourage the next step in the task when they are ready.

Modelling

Model how you do the different parts of the task and describe what and how you are doing. Refer to body parts, objects, movements and use props to support this. Think about where you sit or stand in relation to the child, for example - shoelaces are easier to demonstrate when you sit next to or reach from behind the child and look at the shoe from their perspective.

Hand over hand

This involves (usually standing behind the child and) placing your hands over theirs to physically assist them with gripping, pulling, completing the movements that the task requires, e.g. doing "stab and saw" with a knife and fork, pulling socks over their foot.

Using visual prompts

Using a sequence of photographs or symbols to support a routine can be useful for some children. Support the child to look at the visual prompts at each step and consider what they need to do. Work towards them using these prompts without adult support.

Backward chaining

Here the adult begins the task, with the child only doing the last step. Gradually the adult does less as the child is able to do more of the task themselves. This way the child always gets the reward of finishing the task, e.g. the adult puts the T-shirt over the child's head and helps them to get their arms through the holes. The child then pulls down the T-shirt at the front.

Cognitive / problem solving approach

For children aged 6+ who have good communication, an "ask don't tell" approach could be used to support independence in many daily activities. For example, asking the child what comes next, where to find this information, whether each step is complete (to encourage checking and amending) and what items look like/feel like. Asking questions rather than instructing or telling encourages independent problem solving and supports the child to come up with their own strategies for dressing successfully.

Practice, practice, practice!

This is the most important element of learning the skills needed to be independent in daily activities. Even very short practice sessions regularly can make a huge difference to skills, confidence and motivation for children.

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We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.

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