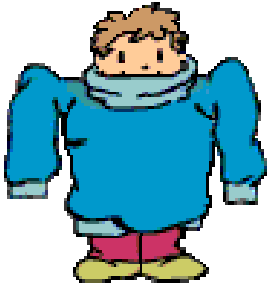


## *Development Of Dressing Skills*

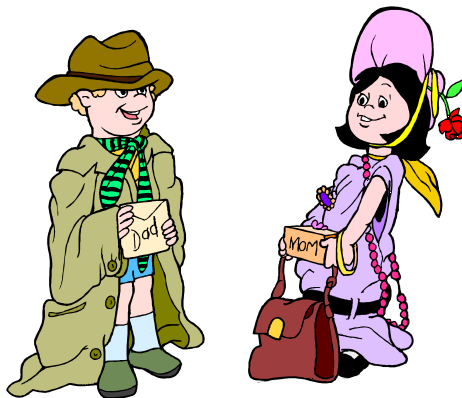
The following describes the sequence of development of dressing skills. Although the age at which a skill is acquired might be quite different amongst children, the sequence generally is the same:

<b>APPROXIMATE AGE</b>	<b>DRESSING SKILL</b>
10 months	- May help pull a leg from pants or an arm from a sleeve.
10-12 months	- Cooperates by pushing arms into sleeves and legs into pants. - May raise their foot when their shoe is in sight.
12 months	- Pushes arm through sleeve. - Holds arm out for sleeve. - Pushes leg through pants. - May remove shoes if laces untied.
18 months	- Can put hat on. - Can unzip a large zipper. - Can remove an unbuttoned shirt.
18-24 months	- Undress from some outfits without help.
24 months	- Finds arm holes in t-shirt. - Puts on shoes with a little help. - May unbutton large buttons. - May be able to pull pants off, and will be able to pull them up in a few months. - This is good timing as you begin to think about toilet training.
26-30 months	- Undress from a variety of outfits with only a little help. - Puts on front-button shirt, except for buttons. - Tries to put socks on.
30-36 months	- Fastens large buttons and almost dresses fully. - May need help with orienting clothes. - May need help with fasteners.
36-48 months	- Children get better and faster at dressing themselves as their fine motor and cognitive skills improve. - Need assistance to remove and put on t-shirt. - Puts on shoes without fasteners; they may be on the wrong feet.
48 months	- Button small buttons. - Puts on shoes with little assistance.
72 months	- Tying own shoes.



## **DRESSING TIPS:**

- From the first few months of life, dress your child in a routine way. Describe what you are doing as you go along. Little phrases such as “give me your foot”, “over your head”, and “where’s your arm?” can become meaningful if you use them each time you dress your child.
- Play dress-up with large button shirts, t-shirts, grown-up shoes, hats, bracelets for wrists/ankles, to help develop body awareness.
- Fasteners may be easier to learn if your child is not wearing the clothing. Try having him/her button a shirt you are wearing or lay a shirt on a table in front of them.
- Each skill can be broken down into several steps. Expect your child to complete only one step initially and increase expectations gradually until he/she completes all steps independently.
- A ‘backward-chaining’ approach is frequently effective in teaching self-help skills. With this approach the parent completes all but the final step in a skill (i.e. parent puts child’s t-shirt over head and pulls arms through sleeves and expects child to pull t-shirt down to waist). After child has mastered this he is expected to put arms through sleeves and pull t-shirt down while parent pulls t-shirt over child’s head. Continue in this manner until the child performs the task independently.
- Progress from dressing visual areas to non-visual areas (i.e. easier for child to put pants on than t-shirt because he can clearly see what he is doing).
- Develop fun dressing rituals to encourage participating.
- Make up a song, play peek-a-boo as the shirt goes over your child’s head.
- Place two choices of outfits out for your child to choose from when they are old enough to do so.



**NOTE:** Information in this handout has been taken from *Development of Dressing Skills* by Kay Benjamin, OTR © 1990 by Communication Skill Builders, Inc.