

DRESSING SKILLS

Dressing involves many skills such as crossing the mid-line, understanding the concept of back and front, inside out and coordination. Dressing is a complex skill and the steps to achieve this can be difficult particularly for a child with a physical disability. A one-sided weakness, upper arm or hand deficiency can affect fine motor skills. Some children may be known to an Occupational Therapist who can offer advice and activities to support their development.

STRATEGIES TO HELP IMPROVE DRESSING SKILLS

Children with physical disability can experience difficulty in acquiring fine motor skills. This can affect their abilities when acquiring dressing skills.

Adults can support children by:

- Allowing extra time for daily routines, e.g. putting on a coat.
- Considering easier fasteners, e.g. Velcro, elasticated waist for trousers / jogging bottoms.
- Encouraging dressing skills to be practised during role-play activities.
- Letting the child complete a sequence, e.g. the last button, pulling up a sock after it is pulled over the foot and heel.



IDEAS TO SUPPORT DRESSING SKILLS

Anoraks, Blazers, Coats, Jackets with toggles and poppers are easier to manage than buttons. Coat zips are easier to pull if a large fob is attached. Poppers or Velcro can be added to zipped jackets for easier fastening.

Blouses or Shirts can have a 'Superman' make over - sew Velcro or poppers behind the front button strip. The shirt can be quickly pulled open or pressed together to close. Cuff buttons can be attached with elastic, so that they do not need to be undone each time.



Laces can prove difficult so it is worth experimenting with different types, e.g. flat or round laces. In general the thicker the lace, the easier it is to tie. Alternatively Velcro-fastened shoes and trainers for younger children are widely available. Piedro boots and other specialist footwear, which children obtain through their physiotherapists, can be ordered with Velcro fastenings.



Coiler shoelaces are stretchy, curly laces that do not require tying. After lacing the shoes, release the lace at the required pressure and it will coil to keep in place. <https://www.essentialaids.com/coilers-shoelaces.html>

Hemi-help have advice for one handed lacing:

http://www.hemihelp.org.uk/families/everyday_living/shoe_lacing/

Mittens are easier to put on or take off than gloves. To avoid loss, sew a piece of elastic to the mitten then thread it through the arms of the child's coat or jacket. Alternatively glove clips can attach the mittens / gloves to their respective cuff, see <http://www.gloveguard.com/>



Tops, e.g. cardigans, jumpers are easier to manage if they are as big as practicable. Make sure the hole for the head is not too tight. When putting on tops, first put the non-dominant arm in the sleeve. Jumpers or sweatshirts are easier than cardigans as they have fewer fastenings. If possible, replace buttons with poppers or Velcro.

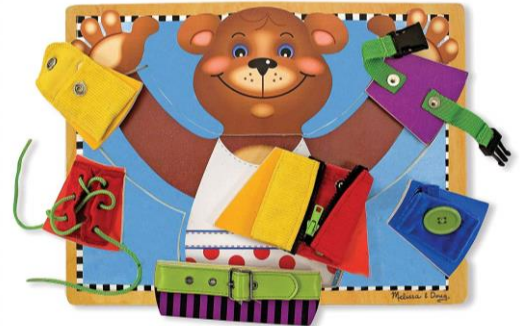
Ties, e.g. clip-on or elasticated ties are easier than actual ties. A tie can be adapted by making a cut at the centre-back then sewing a piece of elastic between the cut pieces so that the tie can be pulled on over the head.



Trousers with an elasticated waist are the easiest design for children. A waist band with a top clip or button can be difficult to fasten. If trousers have a zip, attach a large fob to the end of the zip to help when pulling it up or down. Some suppliers have pull-on trousers with false flies.

RESOURCES

Dressing dolls, e.g. Princess, Pirate are available from many toy catalogues or stores. Dressing skills puzzles show the sequencing for dressing. Fastening skills boards or a cushion with different fasteners, e.g. button, toggle, stud, zip are helpful for practicing dressing skills.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Willowbug can supply practical adaptive clothing for children and teens:

<https://www.willowbug.co.uk/>

Able 2 wear can provide wheelchair clothing in adult sizes:

<https://www.able2wear.co.uk/>

Clothing Solutions for Disabled People is a registered charity based in West Yorkshire. We are a unique service that alters and creates bespoke clothing for disabled people to establish a better quality of life.

<https://www.clothingsolutions.org.uk/>