

Dressing skills

Consider these points when helping children with co-ordination difficulties to develop dressing skills.

- ✓ Do not insist on independent dressing when time is short, as full attention needs to be given to the task.
- ✓ Choose occasions when the child is likely to be motivated to try to dress.
- ✓ Minimise distractions.
- ✓ Consider the best position for the child, for example sitting on a chair or the floor.
- ✓ Begin with a garment with which the child is most likely to succeed.
- ✓ Establish a routine so that methods become predictable.
- ✓ Let the child finish off the movement, for example with a sock pulling the last part up the leg, so that they get a sense of achievement.

If sequencing is a problem, these tips may help.

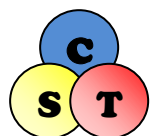
- Lay out garments in a pile in the order in which they are to be put on.
- Make the most of visual cues like the logo, to help differentiate between front and back.
- Use a colour code rather than R and L on shoes to help differentiate between right and left.
- Take photos of the garments to show how they should be laid prior to putting them on.

Buttons

- To help with alignment if there are lots of buttons, begin with the bottom one, as it is more likely to be seen by the child.
- Neck buttons are the worst! Parents may consider sewing the top buttons onto the end of the buttonhole so that it looks as if they are done up, and using Velcro instead.

Activity ideas for buttoning –

- Posting coins Turning the box on its side encourages the sideways movement needed for clothing. Cutting slots at different angles encourages wrist co-ordination.



- ⦿ Attach two buttons to either end of a piece of string or tape and pass it through a hole in a piece of cloth to encourage the bi-lateral element of buttoning.
- ⦿ Start with a large button sewn onto cloth, and a buttonhole on a second piece of cloth, and practise buttoning these together. Progress to smaller pairs.
- ⦿ Place a large garment on the table, for the child to fasten the buttons.

Trousers, T-shirts and jumpers

- To practise these types of garments, use a 'tube' of material. Practise putting the tube over the head, or pushing arms through as if they were in a sleeve. Reduce the width of the tube as progress is made.
- If the child has problems with the actual sleeve, ask them to pass you a small toy through the sleeve.
- Always practise putting trousers or shorts on with the child sitting down. Shorts are easier than trousers.

Socks

- Practise first with big colourful dressing-up socks, then progress to smaller ones.
- Try using a tube, for example an old tubigrip, so that the heel is not an issue.
- Putting talc on hot sticky feet makes it easier to put socks on. They smell better too!

Shoes and laces

- Practise with laces not on the child's feet.
- It is easier to start with something more substantial than a shoelace, for example a thin rope.
- Try the alternative method to bows – form the half-knot, then form loops on each lace to make 'rabbit ears'. Pass one loop over the other, leaving a gap through which to pull it to the front before tightening the bow.
- Flat laces are easier than tubular laces.
- Use different coloured laces to help with orientation.
- If maintaining control of the hands is difficult, stabilise the hand against the table when tying the knot.

Activities to help shoelace tying:-

- Lace cards and boards
- Commercially available lacing toys
- Pass the parcel game where each layer is tied up with string for the child to undo.

