



## Parenting Potty Training Tips For Girls

By Kelly Nault

### Parenting Question

“My older daughter turns 4 in a few days and still has very little interest in potty training.

Initially, I was waiting for her to lead the way by showing interest. Her sister was born when she was 27 months old, and I didn't feel that either immediately before or after the birth was a good time for either of us to start potty training. Time dragged on, until I started finding myself getting angry about changing her dirty diapers just after she turned 3. One day, I decided it was time for her to start using the toilet. The first few mornings, she threw a tantrum about wanting a diaper, but then she accepted wearing underpants. I made up a chart and let her put stickers on it for going in the toilet. There was some success, but as time went by, the success rate declined. She became more and more resistant to reminders to go to the toilet.

Earlier this year, our family decided to move house, and I could see this was causing my daughter some stress. After talking to other moms, I decided to remove the potty pressure—so I asked my daughter whether she would like to wear diapers or underpants. For a while, she chose to go back to diapers. After three weeks, she asked to go back to underpants. I tried to be neutral about her decisions and to keep my input low-key and supportive. My husband and I praised her verbally when she succeeded. But the same thing happened.

I know my daughter is very bright, strong-willed, and likes to push my buttons. She is also very sensitive and cautious. She is genuinely afraid of sitting on toilets without a child's potty-seat on top, but we don't make her do that if she doesn't want to. We either take her potty-seat with us to friends' houses, or allow her to choose to wear pull-ups when we go out. Occasionally, we have gotten so frustrated that we have coerced her (for example, no lunch until you sit on the potty)—despite knowing that negativity should never be part of the potty training process.

I did some research and found that the only way of eliminating resistance is to eliminate whatever your child is resisting **against**. So I've tried being completely neutral about the whole thing and to show no negative reaction to 'accidents'. Maybe I haven't tried long enough, but the accidents just seem to go on and on. Eventually, I can't start showing disapproval and getting angry again. This week, she is back in diapers because I am so tired of dealing with the wet and dirty clothes (to be honest, the seemingly pointless resistance bugs me much more than the laundry). Obviously, my behavior is enabling hers and together we are creating this cycle, but I don't know how to change it. Help!"

—Mom Seeking Potty Training Tips for Girls

## Positive Parenting Tip from Clinical Counselor and Award Winning Parenting Kelly Nault

Dear Mom Seeking Potty Training Tips for Girls:

Phew! I am tired from just reading about your experience, so I can imagine how frustrated you must be! The good news is that potty training tips for girls are essentially no different from potty training tips for boys.

Firstly, good for you for doing some research on resistance. I do believe your daughter is resisting—but not what you think she's resisting. She's actually resisting growing up. You've brought a new baby into the home and, to an oldest child who used to be the *only* child, this can be traumatic. Your daughter is faced with the fact that *she* is no longer the baby. When this happens (especially when you have two children close in age and of the same sex), the oldest child may:

- Find a way to continue to act like the baby of the family by wearing diapers.
- Look for ways to keep you and your husband busy with her (and not her sister), including the sticker chart and the back-and-forth resistance you are experiencing with potty training. ***Negative attention is better than none at all.***

### Effective Parenting Potty Training Tips for Girls Who Resist

Consistently use these five effective potty training tips for girls who are resisting and your potty training situation will turn around relatively quickly. Be patient and plan for things to take some time (especially during the first couple of weeks).

1. **Have Faith that She WILL Learn** – No matter how resistant your daughter is to potty training, she will learn (everyone does). Potty training is one of the key skills preschoolers need to learn, and they *do* learn it—be patient and know that some learn slower than others.
2. **Stick with Your Decision to Forgo Pull-ups and Diapers** – As you know, accidents (many of them) will happen. But when kids aren't given the opportunity to experience the natural discomfort that comes with wet clothes—by using pull-ups that soak it all up—this can prolong the time it takes for potty training.
3. **Stay Away from External Reward Systems** – You don't need stickers to reward your daughter for her success. The rewards of potty training should be the internal rewards she experiences from feeling good about learning a new skill that comes with growing up. Continue to encourage her when she remembers to go to the washroom.
4. **Get Her to Help Clean Up When Accidents Happen** – Continue to not make a big deal out of accidents. Let go of the many external reminders (verbal and visual) all together. The next time she has an accident, have her help you do the washing and thank her for it. Be consistent with this and allow her to learn from the experience of wet pants.
5. **Give Your Daughter More Responsibilities Around the House** – The more your daughter can

do around the house to help, the more she'll feel good about her position as "big sister". Look for ways for her to help you with the baby and ways for her to help you out with the housework. Then thank her! Give her the opportunity to pass on what she learns to her "little sister" and your situation will improve even more. All this can go far in boosting her sense of contribution, responsibility and her desire to grow up.

I also suggest finding a way to let go of your own anger around the pottng training issue. It appears you have a very strong-willed daughter on your hands who is pushing back. The more anger you feel (even when not outwardly expressed), the more she will resist and push back. Unfortunately, parents who get into this type of emotional tug-of-war lose! If you start to see her accidents as quality time you can have together doing laundry, you might feel a shift. I would also highly recommend reading Chapter 7 ("Secret to Solving Sibling Rivalry Once And For All") of my parenting book *When You're About to Go Off the Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids with You*, so you can quickly nip any other future sibling-related issues in the bud.

Kelly Nault, MA corporate spokesperson and award winning parenting author of *When You're About To Go Off The Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You* inspires moms to put themselves first—for the sake of their children. She shares time-tested tools that motivate children to want to be well behaved, responsible and happy! Sign up for her free online parenting course at [www.UltimateParenting.com](http://www.UltimateParenting.com).

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