



**RAISING
MULTIPLES**
a MOST Community

Tricks of the Trade – Potty Training Multiples

*A compilation of tips from over 20 years of advice from Raising Multiples, a MOST Community, families
Edited by Lauretta Shokler, mother of two singletons and triplets, first published in MOST's Supertwins magazine.*



How do I potty train multiples? This common question for parents of triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets, and more is often asked with trepidation, desperation, or sometimes, just plain fear. While the process varies for each family, the first and most important facts to remember are 1) you are not alone and 2) it can be done without losing your mind.

Knowing when to potty train is as important as knowing how to potty train. More important

than either however, is the importance of parents recognizing when this developmental task may be addressed appropriately. In addition to the child or children being ready for this developmental milestone, parents must be ready for the commitment and consistency required to help each child transition from diapers to underwear.

Like other transitions, some families find potty training each child individually easier to manage while other families train all the children at the same time use techniques such as reward systems. Whatever the approach, the key to success is patience, timing, and sometimes a little luck.

We have compiled the following information to help parents starting on this journey. First we offer the 15 single most common tips submitted by families over the past 20 years. Surprisingly, at least one (and sometimes many) of these 15 techniques were cited in every letter, article, tidbit, tip list, and Q&A we published over the years. Why? Because they work!

Also included is a checklist of signs to help parents recognize when their children may be ready to approach this major milestone. Lastly is a sampling of funny, encouraging, and hopefully inspirational quotes from other parents of triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets, or more, just like you.

Top 15 Potty Training Tips:

1. For older toddlers, try using no diapers or Pull-Ups (children tend not to notice what is happening with these high-absorbency products) at naps and bedtime because they'll wait

to go in them as soon as they're on which only confuses them. Or try using cloth diapers with rubber pants or waterproof mattress pad as they will feel the wetness more.

2. When night time potty training is not yet mastered, dress the child in regular underwear with a Pull-Up over it at bedtime. If the child is dry in the morning, reuse the Pull-Up over underwear every night until it gets wet or wears out.
3. Be prepared for a few "wet" weeks, but not making a big deal over accidents alleviates the pressure the children already feel in trying to master the potty!
4. If one or more is ready before the others, try potty training them one at a time. If the child isn't ready, let it go and try again in a month or two.
5. Avoid succumbing to pressure by friends or family members to potty train by a certain age. Base the process on indications that the child is ready because children who are ready for this transition usually train faster.
6. Often, once one multiple begins the potty training process, the others become intrigued, but that may not always be the case.
7. Use incentives like praise, the opportunity to pick out their own big-kid underwear, small candies (M&Ms work well), stamp or sticker charts. Some families offer a special gift like a small stuffed animal, coloring book, toy car, etc. once they are completely potty trained for a week or more.
8. Involve older siblings, or already potty trained multiple birth siblings, to share in the praise process.
9. Try potty training in the summer when children are wearing less clothing (and can go bottomless).
10. Try videos or books like "It's Potty Time" and "Once Upon a Potty." They can often be found used or checked-out at libraries for free.
11. During the training process, take a potty chair in the car (many families line the potty with plastic bags filled with a little kitty litter to absorb liquid).
12. Keep a potty chair outside if children are outdoors frequently.
13. Some families get by with using just a toilet and step stool, others use potty rings, others use a single potty chair, and others have more than one, or even one potty chair per child. Some buy identical potty chairs to avoid them being distracted by which chair to use, others buy different styles of potty chairs and assign one to each child so they don't fight over whose is whose. No one system works for every family!

14. Some children respond well to positive timing (especially children who master part of the process, but are still reluctant, or children who wait to have a diaper or training pant put on to go). Try to figure out when they would be due to go to the bathroom and take them to the bathroom to try. For example, try having each child sit on the potty when they first wake-up, at lunchtime, and each night before their bath.
15. To help with nighttime accidents during training, use a plastic mattress bag to slide the mattress into so that these “accidents” don’t destroy the bed. Be sure to still put on a cloth mattress cover and sheet over the mattress.

Is Your Child Ready?

According to Lesia Oesterreich, M.S., a Family Life Extension Specialist at Iowa State University, if a child is doing most of the following, they are ready to master the potty:

- Follows simple directions.
- Remains dry for at least 2 hours at a time during the day.
- Dry after nap time.
- Regular and predictable bowel movements. (Some children move their bowels two to three times a day, others may go two to three days without a bowel movement.)
- Walks to and from the bathroom, pulls down own pants, and pulls them up again.
- Seems uncomfortable with soiled or wet diapers.
- Seems interested in the toilet or potty chair.
- Has asked to wear grown-up underwear.

Personal Training Stories and Inspiration from Other Multiple Birth Families

“My triplets were (honestly) a breeze to potty train at 2.5 years old. We just put on underwear and took them to the potty (big stool) every 30 minutes or so, whether or not they said they had to go and they were happy to go. We talked about the potty a lot and rewarding ‘Sparkle Fingers’ for a job well done will always put a smile on little faces. I think we lived in the bathroom for about 4-6 weeks but it was well worth the end result, NO MORE DIAPERS! We did have plenty of accidents but time and patience is really all it takes.” Amy

“I dreaded potty training; however, it was not as bad as I had expected. In fact, it was pretty easy. I believe that is because I waited until the children themselves wanted to use the toilet. A couple of months after turning 3, my trio decided to just start using the toilet. I really wasn’t involved in the process, save for wiping them. I didn’t have to use rewards or prompt them to go, they were in charge and that worked just fine for us. Waiting until the children were ready certainly made the whole process less stressful than I expected. Good luck!” Catherine

“Our triplets attend a preschool so the teacher decided when to start each one and trained them separately. She waited until their pull-ups remained dry all day while using the potty at school. Then she put them in underpants and a pull-up or plastic pants and set a timer every 30 minutes. It took longer at home, but I followed the same routine that they did at school as best I could.” Bonnie

“We are in the midst of this with our BBBG Quadruplets. My daughter was trained well before she was 3 and we have just finished with the first of the boys. At the age of 2 we started by having the children sit on the potty before and after baths. It was a way to introduce the potty chair and after a month we started having them sit on the potty chair every morning and eventually added sitting on the potty every night before bed. For a reward we used an M&M each time that they went potty. As one began to really do well we moved them into real training pants and then “Big Child Pants.” Good luck as the process may seem overwhelming. It is a wonderful feeling to see them each achieve their goal of being a real “Big Kid”. Korrie

*“My triplets, who were born at 28 weeks, continue to have a lot of medical issues. They aren’t doing well with potty training at all and are almost 4. We have been at it with one of them for a year now. My son has been most resistant to the idea. We haven’t been pushy with this, but at this age, you have to push a little. It’s beginning to keep them from being able to do things. I work full time at home and have a nanny who takes care of the children while I work, but I also do a lot of child care during the day, thanks to my flexible work schedule. It’s very frustrating!”
Anonymous*

“I have triplets that will be three in a few months. Two of them are potty trained and the other we will say is still considering it. My problem is twofold. The two that are now in big kid underwear have started treating their brother like the baby of the family and worse yet, he is enjoying this. It just does not feel right. Also, if he is not potty trained before the end of the summer he will not be able to attend the same nursery school program as his sister and brother. I feel pressured to train him but if he were my only child I would wait for cues from him that he was ready. I am feeling really torn” Anonymous

“We potty trained our 3-year-old triplets this past summer. I took the advice of all the other moms I had spoken with and did one at a time. We had the pressure of preschool hanging over our heads also, starting in August. I thought we had two of them done and then we went on vacation two weeks before preschool was to start. It backfired on us big time! A week later, when we came home, they were ALL back in pull-ups. Feeling the pressure even more, we stayed home, indoors for an entire week straight! That’s a miracle for me ... we usually are on the go quite a bit! I had everyone in underwear the first day and almost completely trained by day three. On day four, we took a short trip to get lunch and went straight home without any accidents. By the following Tuesday, the first day of preschool, they were done. I did, however, call the preschool teacher and explain our situation and the vacation dilemma, and she said that was fine. She doesn’t expect them to be perfect and accidents will happen. I was very relieved. Now, at 3 ½ yrs. they are all doing fine Good luck, it’s wonderful to be out of diapers!” Kathy