



## Dressing Myself

### Buttons

Buttons are a hard skill to master as it involves both hands working together but making slightly different movements. Your child will not really be able to do this until after the age of 4.

Below are some activity ideas to help your child practice buttoning.

### Activity Ideas

- Start practicing with larger flat buttons of a contrasting colour to the clothing, gradually progressing to smaller ones. Ensure that the button hole is large enough for the button to easily fit through (old cardigans are good for practicing on as the wool tends to have stretched after years of use, also clothing with toggles rather than buttons is easier to start with)
- Start buttoning at the bottom of a shirt; it is easier to line up the bottom of each side of a shirt to make sure the buttons and holes are aligned correctly. Top buttons are always more difficult to fasten, as your child can't see what their hands are doing. This is particularly true in school shirts, as not only can your child not see the top button but the button hole is aligned in a different direction
- Limit the number of buttons a child has to do; only undo the top few buttons when taking off a shirt or blouse and then remove the garment over the head. It can then be put on over the head the next morning and only a few buttons will need to be done up
- Push the button part-way through the hole so that it is 'peeking' out the other side. Ask the child to pull the button the rest of the way through. Once he/she can do this, help the child to push the button into the hole for you to pull through. Now put the two parts of the task together

### Alternative Strategies

- Choose trousers or skirts with an elastic waist band if buttons and buckles are difficult
- Velcro can be used instead of buttons. For example, on a coat or shirt, use Velcro on the back of the flap and sew buttons of the top flap so that the shirt still appears to be buttoned
- Try leaving cuff buttons done up. Alternatively, sew a piece of elastic or a button attached with elastic thread across the cuffs so that it can be stretched open when the hand is pushed through
- Use elastic thread instead of cotton to attach buttons which will allow the child to pull a shirt over their head with buttons fastened. You may have to sew the top shirt buttons and cuff buttons more loosely



### Activities to improve buttoning skills

1. Post coins into a tub with a slot cut out of the lid and then progress to posting large buttons into a tub. Once the child is able to post the large buttons, move onto smaller buttons into a different tub with smaller slots
2. Thread large plastic buttons onto a lace starting with the buttons with one hole only and then progressing up to buttons with five holes
3. Thread small beads onto a pipe cleaner, and then progress onto threading beads onto a lace
4. Post large buttons through a circular mat (beer mat) with a large slot cut out of it, then progress to smaller buttons
5. Post loose buttons through a variety of button holes
6. Create lots of different shapes using felt and cut a slot (buttonhole) into the centre of each shape. Get a long piece of ribbon and sew a button on each end of the ribbon. Ask the child to remove all the different felt shapes (one by one) from the ribbon over one of the buttons, and then when all the shapes are off the ribbon, ask the child to place all the shapes back onto the ribbon. Once your child can manage the ribbon, get a short piece of elastic and sew a button on each end of the elastic. Ask the child to again use the felt shapes as above by removing each shape and then putting each shape back onto the elastic
7. Practice buttoning up garments which are draped over the back of a chair with the buttons facing outwards
8. Now practice buttoning up a garment which is on the child. Start with large buttons and buttonholes and then gradually start making the buttons smaller and smaller. If your child is still finding it difficult; push the button part-way through the hole so that it is 'peeking' out the other side. Ask the child to pull the button the rest of the way through. Once he/she can do this, help the child to push the button into the hole for you to pull through. Now get your child to put the two parts of the task together so they can independently button up their garment