



Learning to Dress Myself

General Advice

- Involve your child in dressing tasks as early as possible. Talk to them about what you are doing. Turn it into a game when they are a baby, 'I am taking your sock off, one, two, three pop'.
- Undressing is easier than dressing so practice taking clothes off first.
- Loose fitting clothes are easier to manage so start to practicing with pyjamas, jogging bottoms or a loose fitting t-shirt.
- Giving you child the right support is important. Some children prefer to sit on the floor but other children benefit from a small chair.
- Don't focus on too many items of clothing at once. For example focus on taking pyjamas off in the morning. Once they have mastered this introduce putting underwear on.
- Use weekends and school holidays to practice when you have more time and not in a rush.
- When the child is older ensure they have a mirror available. You can then encourage them to see that their jumper is twisted or buttons don't match up. ask them to spot what is not quite right
- Encourage the child to correct the mistake themselves before you help.
- Ensure all adults helping the child to dress help in the same way to ensure a consistent approach.
- Learning to dress is a complicated skill so needs time, patience and lots of practice. Praise every achievement.

Buttons – Hints and Tips.

To make fastening buttons easier, try the following ideas:

- Play games that involve a pincer grip (thumb and index finger tips) like "Pick up Sticks", Lego, use of squeeze toys, water pistols, sand play, making shapes with pipe cleaners. Also use games that increase sensory awareness of thumb and index fingers, e.g. finger puppets, finger painting, using playdoh.

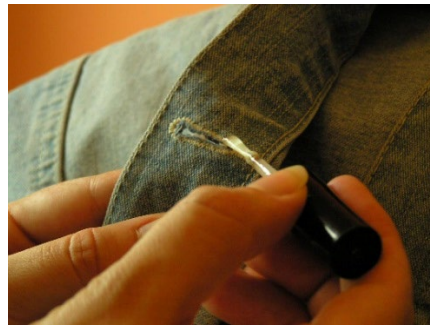
- For practising, try with a shirt on their lap first so the child can see what they need to do easily, and then practise with the shirt on. When they can do their buttons with the shirt on and they are confident with this, then practise with their eyes shut. Use the same idea with trouser buttons/clasps, i.e. first practise with them off and then with them on.
- Use bigger buttons of a different colour to the fabric.
Avoid fabric with checks or stripes if possible as this can be tiring on the eyes and make buttonholes difficult to see. You can re-introduce these patterns when the child is used to buttons.
- Take off any spare buttons that may be on the inside of shirts. They only confuse the issue.



- Encourage the child to start buttoning from the bottom of the shirt so they can see what they are doing. To do top buttons, make sure they can check this in a mirror (at their level) in the area where they normally get changed.
- To ensure that buttons do not come off easily, put some nail polish on the thread at the back of the button as it secures it for longer.



- To ensure that the button can fit through the buttonhole easily, try snipping the edges of the hole slightly so that it is slightly looser. To ensure buttonholes do not fray and to provide a little sensory feedback and stability, you can use clear nail polish to seal the ends (it will feel a bit like the end of sealed rope).



- Use shirts that are slightly bigger but take care with the temptation to use Dad's shirts as they are often too big, with long sleeves, and it can make it difficult to see.

Zips

Top Tips for beginners:

- Make sure that you are practicing with a zip that is easy to do – practise yourself and find one that you find easier.
- First make sure that your child can pull up zips that are already engaged for example trouser zips.
- Using hand - over - hand assistance can help your child to feel the movement that is needed.
- Make sure that your child can see what they are doing
- Practice with the garment laid flat on a stable surface first – it may be easier than looking down to fasten it.
- Usually bigger zippers are easier to see and grip initially.
- Zips without flaps of material around them are easier as they do not get in the way.
- Practising with an old zip can be useful. You could also colour the one side of an old zip with nail polish for clarity.

Method:

- This method is shown with the garment off. Once your child is able to do this easily you may want to zip up a garment when worn – the method will be the same - just seen from the other side.
- Lay out the garment so that it is flat and you can see which sides need to be put together.



- Make sure that the zipper is at the bottom of the garment.



- The end of the zipper should be flush with the metal/plastic end bit (on the same side). Move the pull tab out of the way and hold it back with the thumb of the hand on the same side. Do not let this side go.



- With the other hand, take the flat metal/plastic side (that slips into the zipper) and hold it about 1 cm away from the edge between the tip of the thumb and index finger.



- Now slip the flat side into the groove of the zipper. It is really important that the other hand is still holding tightly onto the zipper.



- The flat edge should be slid down to the very bottom edge of the garment. Sometimes you can hear a soft click when it has reached the bottom properly.



Tip: Stop your child here initially – children tend to get excited that they have reached this step, rush and undo all their hard work.

- Make sure that one hand is holding both sides of the fabric AND the bottom metal/plastic end - **very** tightly.



- With the other hand pull up on the pull tab, keeping a firm grip of the garment.

Shoelaces

General advice:

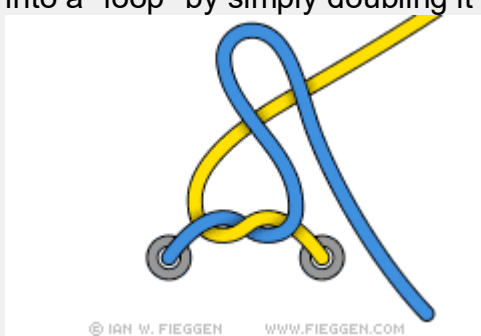
- Practice with a shoe on the table rather than bending down to the foot.
- Use slightly wider shoelaces made of natural fibres.
- Join two half shoelaces of different colours together to make it easier to follow the diagrams.
- Make sure the child can comfortably complete each stage before moving onto the next.

A great website to visit is Ian Fieggen's shoelace website: www.fieggen.com.

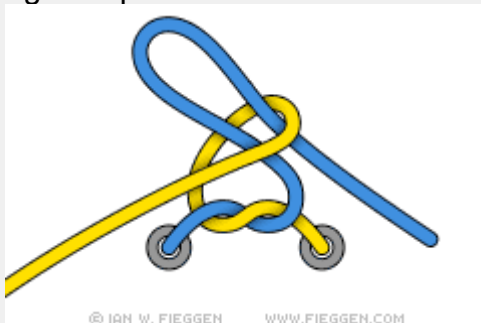
The diagrams are taken from his website.

Standard 'Round the tree' method.

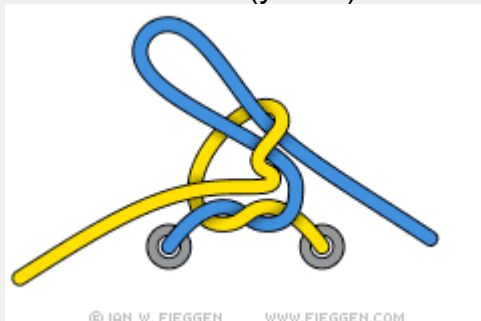
- **Step 1:**
- Tie a Left-over-Right [Starting Knot](#) as shown, then make the right (blue) end into a "loop" by simply doubling it back onto itself.



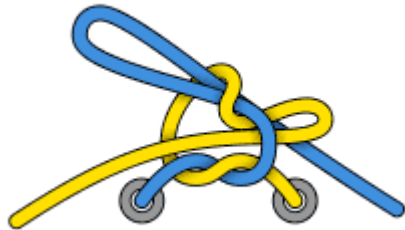
- **Step 2:**
- Take the left (yellow) end and pass it around to the right, going **behind** the right loop.



- **Step 3:**
- Continue the left (yellow) end **around** the right loop to end up in front.



- **Step 4:**
- Start to push the left (yellow) lace into the "hole" that has just been made.



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- **Step 5:**
- The yellow lace comes out through the **back** of the hole to form a right (yellow) loop.

Two Bunny Ears' method.

Step 1:

Tie a Left-over-Right [Starting Knot](#) as shown, then make both ends into "loops" by simply doubling them back onto themselves. People often refer to these as "*Bunny Ears*".



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Step 2:

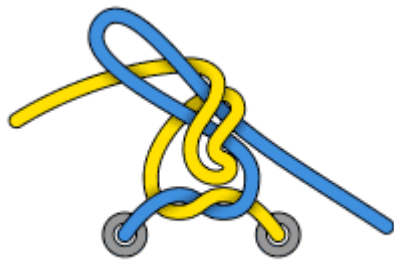
Cross the right (blue) loop over the left (yellow) loop so that the **blue** loop sits in front and is now the **left** loop.



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Step 3:

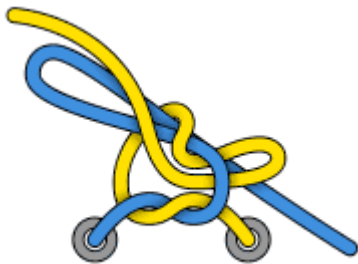
The **yellow** loop is now the **right** loop. Begin to wrap that loop around the left (blue) loop to end up in front.



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Step 4:

Start to push the right (yellow) loop into the "hole" below the two loops. This is really the same as if you were tying a regular shoelace knot except that you are working with a pre-formed loop instead of forming the loop on the way through.



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Step 5:

The right (yellow) loop comes out through the **back** of the hole.



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Step 6:

Grab hold of both loops and pull tight to complete the knot. Notice that the loose end of the right (yellow) loop drops back down to the front left, making the finished knot exactly the same as if you'd used the regular one-loop method.

Finished Knot



If tied **correctly**, the finished "Two Loop Shoelace Knot" is identical to either the [Standard Shoelace Knot](#) or even my own [Ian Knot](#), the World's Fastest Shoelace Knot.

Sensitivity to Clothing

- Some children can find certain textures of clothing difficult to tolerate.
- In general loose fitting clothes are easier to tolerate than tight fitting clothes.
- Cut out labels from clothing, particularly underwear.
- If your child is sensitive to seams in clothes, then seamless socks and underwear are commercially available from a range of websites.

Adaptations to Clothing.

- If your child continues to have difficulty with dressing you may wish to consider adapting clothes.
- Dressability is a charity based in Swindon who can adapt a range of clothing while ensuring the adaptations are not obvious. For example standard zip up trousers can be changed into elasticated pull-up trousers or a buttoned shirt can have magnets placed behind the buttons for ease.

Contact Details:

Telephone: 01793 512878

Email: mail@dressability.org.uk

Opening hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
10:00 am — 3:00 pm.
On-site visits are by appointment only.

Address:

Unit 2, Bradbury House
Westmead Drive
Swindon
SN5 7ER

The office is on the upper floor of the MS Swindon Therapy Centre.