Self Care
Dressing Myself

Buttons

Buttons are a hard skill to learn. Both hands need to work together but make different movements. Below are some activity ideas to help your child practice buttoning.

General Hints and Tips

- Start by teaching unbuttoning first. It is easier.

- Start with large buttons and work to smaller ones.

- Buttons that are a different colour to the clothes make it easier.

- Make sure that the buttonhole is large enough for the button to fit through easily. Using clothes that have been well worn helps. If the button holes are too tight for your child to manage you can take the buttons off and replace them with slightly smaller ones.

- Make it fun and practice as part of play. Dress teddies and dolls. Get your child to dress up in your old clothes with big buttons or toggles.

- It is easier to practice when your child can see what they are doing. Laying clothes flat on a table or hanging it on the back of a chair can make it easier.

- Push the button part-way through the hole so that it is 'peeking' out the other side. Ask your child to pull the button the rest of the way through. Once they can do this, help your child to push the button into the hole for you to pull through. Now put the two parts of the task together.

Tips for School Shirts

- Teach your child to 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 align.

- Limit the number of buttons your 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 go over your child's head the next morning and only a few buttons will need to be buttoned up.

- 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. Not only can your child not see the top button but the top buttonhole is in a different direction.

Activity Ideas

- Post coins into a tub with a slot cut out of the lid and then progress to posting large buttons into a tub. Once your child is able to post the large buttons move onto smaller buttons. Lastly move onto a tub with smaller slots.

  - Thread large plastic buttons onto a lace/string through one hole.

  - Thread large beads onto a pipe cleaner. Then move onto threading onto a lace. Now try with smaller beads.

- Cut a large slot in a circular cardboard mat (e.g. drinks mat). Post large buttons through the slot and then try small buttons.

  - 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.   Feed all the shapes onto the ribbon. Get your child to remove all the different felt shapes one by one. Then when all the shapes are off the ribbon ask the child put them all 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. Play the same game of taking the shapes off and putting them back on.

- Have fun with these games. You can turn them into a race. Or see how many they can do in one minute.

Alternative Strategies

- Choose trousers or skirts with an elastic waistband if buttons and buckles are too hard. Choose a polo shirt instead of a shirt for school. There are fewer buttons and it is easier to leave the top button open.

- Use Velcro instead of buttons. For example on a coat or shirt use Velcro on the back of the flap. Then sew buttons onto the top flap so that the shirt still appears buttoned. You can also buy school shirts with Velcro fastenings.

- Try leaving cuff buttons done up. Or try:
  - Sewing a piece of elastic across the cuffs.
  - Use elastic thread to sew the button on so that your child can stretch the cuffs open to push their hand through.

- Use elastic thread instead of cotton to attach buttons. This 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 with less tension.