



Buttons and Zips

Many children may have difficulty doing buttons and zips because their hands are weak, or because it is difficult to coordinate the complex movements needed for these tasks.

Buttons



Start with the child sitting down.

Practice first doing buttons with the item off as this is easier e.g. on a table or on the back of a chair.

Use an old, large shirt with big buttons and buttonholes (you may need to adapt an old shirt for this) Adult size jackets or cardigans are good as the buttons are usually big and the buttonholes loose if it has been worn a few times.

Talk through each stage of the task in terms of what the next step is – 'find the button', 'open the hole', 'post it through', 'grab it'.

Use **Backward chaining**: (completing the entire process, but leaving the last part for him/her to do) e.g.

Do all the buttons up for the child, leaving the very top one.

You may need to assist him/her by breaking the task down further:

Have the child pull the buttonhole edge of the shirt over the button that is already halfway through.

Have the child pinch button and pull the buttonhole edge of the shirt over the button that is just started in the hole.

Have the child pinch button and start it through hole to button.

Then move onto buttons on his/her shirt.

You can try other tasks such as posting coins into a money box to practice the skills needed for this task.

If the child is still having difficulty:

To save time you could keep some buttons done up if you can put on and take off the shirt without undoing them all. Sometimes it is more comfortable to leave the top buttons (at your throat) undone, but check if this is allowed.

You might want to think about whether you can change difficult fastenings like buttons for Velcro or poppers or elastic waist bands to make getting changed easier.

Zips

Use a jacket with a large zip, or you may like to add a large tab to the grasp part of the zip.

Backward chaining: (completing the entire process, but leaving the last part for him/her to do). Start with the shank already inserted into the slide bottom, and then introduce the insertion procedure:

Have the child do up zip when three-fourths zipped

Have the child do up zip when one-fourth zipped

Have the child do up zip from bottom, with shank and zip bottom already fastened (may need guidance to grasp the pull tab)

The child holds the bottom of zip with one hand, and is guided to insert shank into zip bottom and zip.

The child does up zip independently.

