



**BRIGHT
MAP**

Before the Potty Plan

A readiness guide for families who are not quite ready to begin potty training - but are ready to start preparing.

No big training plan yet.

For now, we're making the bathroom, the routine, and the words around toileting feel familiar.



START HERE

Who is this for?

This is the in-between stage: your child is beginning to notice toileting, but your family is not ready to jump into a full potty-training plan.

They're noticing

Diaper changes, body cues, the bathroom, or what other people do there.

They're curious

They may watch the toilet flush, label pee or poop, or ask questions.

They'll try a little

Maybe they sit for a moment - even fully clothed - or help with one small step.

They're not ready for the whole thing

And that is exactly why this phase exists.

THE GOAL

We're preparing, not training

Right now, success is not staying dry. It is making the pieces of toileting feel less new.

- Curiosity about the potty and bathroom routine.
- Useful words for pee, poop, wet, dry, potty, wipe, flush, and help.
- Comfort entering the bathroom and being around the toilet.
- Familiarity with sitting - clothes on is completely fine.
- Positive experiences with the small steps that will matter later.

The big idea

Low pressure. Lots of familiarity. No required outcome.

Make potty prep part of ordinary life

Nothing here needs to feel like a lesson. Choose a few easy moments and keep them short.

Narrate it

“You’re wet. Let’s get dry.” “You pooped. Time for a clean diaper.”

Invite, don’t require

Let your child come into the bathroom with you when appropriate. Familiarity is the point.

Try a tiny sit

Before bath or after a diaper change, offer a brief sit. Clothes can stay on.

Read about it

Potty books let you talk about the routine when no one is being asked to do it.

Give them a job

Flush, carry a wipe, choose a book, or help with one small step.

Build the words before you need them

A child does not need to speak independently to start learning the language of toileting.

Words to make familiar

PEE

POOP

POTTY

WET

DRY

WIPE

FLUSH

HELP

ALL DONE

PANTS DOWN

Say what is happening

Label the moment instead of turning it into a quiz. Pair words with signs, pictures, gestures, or the communication system your child already uses.

Model useful phrases

Try simple language such as “potty,” “I’m wet,” “help,” “all done,” or “pants down.”

Keep bathroom language ordinary.

Familiar words now can make a structured plan easier to understand later.

A little prep for the grown-ups, too

A structured potty plan works best when the adults have enough bandwidth to be calm, consistent, and flexible.

-  Can I respond to accidents and missed cues calmly?
-  Can I let progress be gradual instead of expecting a quick timeline?
-  Can I encourage without shame, threats, or pressure?
-  Can our family be reasonably consistent once we decide to begin?

Use this phase to make later easier

Gather what you may need, make the bathroom easier to navigate, practice the language, and talk with your BCBA about what readiness looks like for your child.

A few things you can let go of

“They should be trained by a certain age.”

Children build toileting skills on different timelines. Look at the skills and comfort your child is showing now.

“If we wait, we’re falling behind.”

Waiting to begin a structured plan is not the same as doing nothing. Preparation is learning.

“We should just take the diapers away.”

For a child who is not ready, a sudden change can create more resistance. A planned approach may fit better.

“They can ask for snacks, so they can ask to potty.”

Toileting also depends on noticing body cues, tolerating the routine, and completing several motor steps.

Small steps count

At this stage, progress can look tiny from the outside. It still tells you something important: this is becoming more familiar.

- Sits on the potty for a few seconds.
- Walks into the bathroom more comfortably.
- Points to or labels potty, pee, poop, wet, or dry.
- Watches a toy complete a pretend potty routine.
- Helps flush or completes one small part of the routine.
- Tolerates pants down / pants up practice.

Right now, interest and comfort are the outcome.

FOR NOW

You can skip these things

You do not need to turn this preparation phase into full potty training before your family is ready.

Accident counts

A strict toileting schedule

Comparing your child to someone else

Underwear all day

Home data sheets unless your BCBA asks for them

A deadline for being “fully trained”

Meet the child you have today.

Comfort, communication, and familiarity are already part of the foundation.

Five low-pressure practice ideas

1

Pretend play

Let a doll or stuffed animal sit, wipe, flush, and get dressed.

2

Toy bathroom

Act out the routine away from the real toilet.

3

Clothing practice

Practice elastic-waist pants down and back up during ordinary dressing.

4

Make a visual

Create a simple picture sequence of the bathroom routine together.

5

Let them choose

Pick a potty seat, insert, stool, or bathroom book - even if it is not used consistently yet.

You're laying the foundation

You do not have to begin formal potty training to help your child move toward it.

Right now, you are helping the bathroom feel predictable. You are teaching useful words. You are giving your child safe opportunities to explore the routine. And you are learning which pieces feel easy and which still feel hard.

Bring these observations to your BCBA

- What your child is willing to do
- What they avoid or resist
- Words, signs, or visuals they understand
- How they respond to sitting
- Which parts are becoming easier

No need to turn preparation into a test.

Keep it familiar, calm, and manageable. When it is time for a structured plan, you will already have useful routines to build from.