



Designing Your Home to Promote Independence

"Help Me to Help Myself"

Encouraging your child's independence shows:

- you respect your child's development
- you trust your child to be capable
- you support your child's concentration, focus, self-discipline and self-reliance
- you encourage your child's self-awareness and sensitivity to the needs of others and their community

Scaffold your child's growing independence by:

- observing your child and what they are capable of at the moment
- anticipating where your child will be next and prepare to support them
- change the physical environment as needed
- create opportunities for independence in all areas of the child's life
- offer distinct choices that lead to decision-making and independent activity
- prepare yourself psychologically to positively support your growing child with each new stage

Things to Remember:

- be a role model (remember they are watching all that you do)
- break down activities into manageable steps
- make child-sized tools accessible
- allow the child to do part of a bigger job
- eliminate power struggles by embedding the control of error into the activity so your child can correct their own mistakes and use natural consequences
- give time and be patient

Consider the following areas of the house:

- Entrance
 - low hooks, a place for shoes, accessories and a bench or small stool
- Bedroom
 - a bed that your child can get in and out of independently
 - clothing storage that limits choice but allows for independent dressing (and a place that you store all the extra clothes to rotate in)
 - a place for your child to sit and dress
 - a full length mirror
 - book display of a few books (and a place to store extra books)
 - the entire room is safe for your child's use
- Bathroom
 - a low shelf, cupboard or drawer for all your child's toiletries
 - accessible toileting system (potty or seat on toilet with stool)
 - accessible laundry hamper
 - accessible sink or basin
- Kitchen
 - low drawer or cupboard for your child's dishes and kitchen tools
 - dishes and tools that are child-sized
 - place in fridge that the child can access snacks, drinks, etc.
 - place in pantry for child to access food for them
 - learning tower type stool
 - allow the child to be involved in meal preparation
- Dining Room
 - small table and chair for independent snacks
 - accessible chair that pulls up to dining table for family meals
- Family Rooms
 - a space for everyone
 - organized orderly storage
 - limited toys
 - a place for your child to do an activity (mat or small table)