

## Learning to do buttons

Buttoning requires many skills. Both hands have to work together yet perform different movements! Buttons are small and can be difficult to grasp to hold the edge of the button and push it through. Then there is the other hand working to hold that buttonhole. But first, you need to make sure the buttons and holes are lined up correctly! There is a lot of problem solving and sequencing involved in buttoning. All of this is done while wearing the shirt and at an awkward position, while looking down.

Before we actually practice buttoning on a shirt, let's practice pre-buttoning skills.

### Here are some practice ideas!

- Hold coins or buttons on the edge and press them into playdough so they are standing on their edge.
- Cut a slit in felt and push a coin or large button through the felt.
- Cut a slit in cardstock or construction paper. Push buttons through the slits. Try it with tissue paper, too.



SUGARAUNTS.COM  
Photo: sugaraunts.com

- You can also cut a slit on construction paper and use a popsicle stick to push it through the paper.

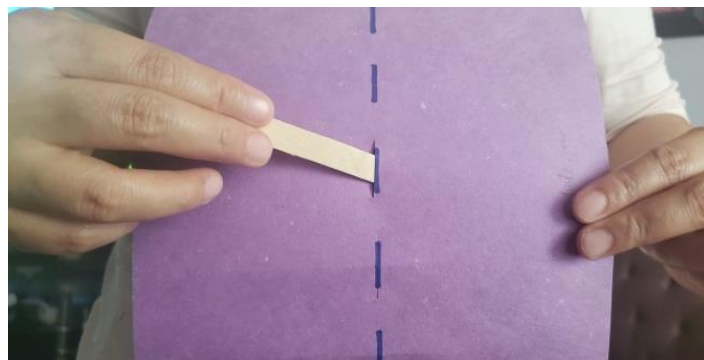
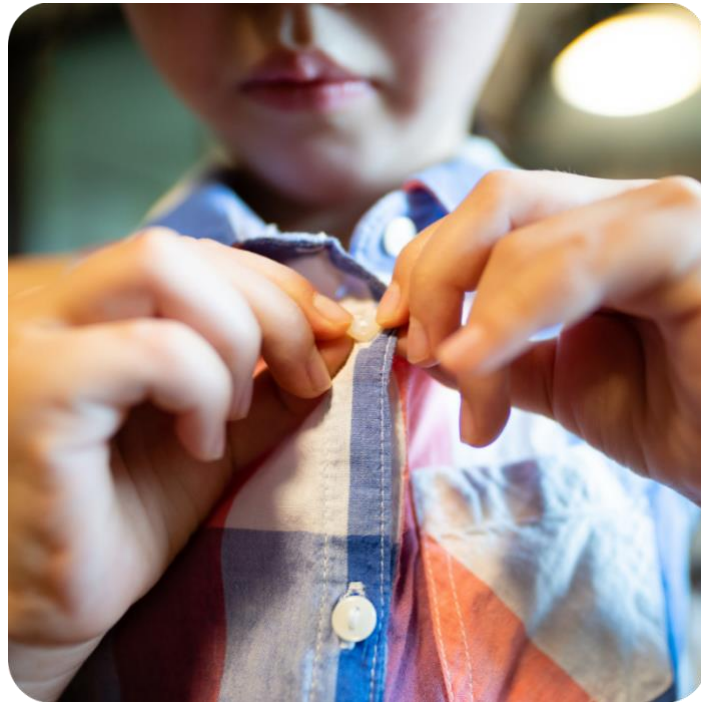


Photo: sugaraunts.com

### Practice on real clothing

- Practice unbuttoning first.
- At first, practice buttoning with a shirt laying on the child's lap or table and positioned like it would be on their body. Practicing with a different shirt on the table gives the child more room to see the buttons and how their hands are working than if they are buttoning on their body.
- Start practicing with larger, flat buttons and then progress to smaller ones. Ensure the buttonhole is large enough as well. Sweaters are often times great to start with.
- Talk through the process: find the button, open the hole, push it through, grab it.
- If aligning buttons to the buttonholes is a difficult task, show them how to take this part a step at a time, by lining up the bottom button to the bottom hole.
- Practice buttoning from bottom to top. The child will have more room to work and a better view of the buttons at the bottom of a vest or shirt.
- Practice buttoning with shirts/vests that are not visually distracting. Use a white shirt with colored buttons. You can also add a dot of paint to buttons to make them stand out.
- Then, practice with an over-shirt, with the shirt on their body.
- For younger kids (age 3) you can snip the buttonhole a little to make buttoning easier.



Try backward chaining: Parents complete all but the last step of buttoning, allowing the child to finish pulling the button through the hole. Once successful, have the child complete the last two steps, by pushing the button into and then through the hole. Gradually add more steps until the child is able to complete the whole buttoning process from the beginning.