

Learning to use a zipper

Zippering requires a lot of skills. This includes managing two hands together at the belly level, using one hand to hold down the zipper chamber **and** the zipper pull **and** the end of the zipper. All the while, the **other** hand is holding the end of the zipper and trying to thread it into the chamber. It's a motor planning process that requires a few essential skills to say the least.

Here are some practice ideas!

Practice 1

- a. Uses only one hand for opening the zipper.
 - Teach zipping using a small purse or pencil case in front of the child.
 - Put some motivating object or preferred edibles in the bag.
 - Initially, a caregiver or school staff is positioned behind the child to provide hand over hand assistance. This activity just practices on how to open the zipper.
 - Make sure the child uses pincer grasp (thumb and index finger) to hold the zipper and provide verbal prompt "OPEN" while doing so.
 - If the child had a difficulty using a pincer grasp, try to curl or flex the middle, ring and little fingers towards the palm and provide hand over hand assistance.
 - After the child opens the pencil case, caregiver or staff immediately closes it.
 - Repeat the process several times for practice until they can independently do it.
- b. Uses both hands.
 - Once a child can open or pull the zipper independently, have the child's other hand to hold the bag (stabilize) and the other hand pulling the zipper.
 - Use the material as above.
 - Again, repeat the process several times for practice until they can independently do it.

Practice 2

Hook/unhook on jacket in front of the child

Step 1: Thumbs on top. Place each child's thumb on top of the zipper chamber and on zipper itself making sure that the zipper is pointed down.

Step 2: Spend a little bit more time in mastering this skill as it gets tricky. Introduce the prompt "feed the mouth" (see picture right) and pull up the zipper. Practice this step several times.



Practice 3*Jacket on a child*

Caregiver/ staff is positioned behind the child to provide hand over hand assistance. Use the same verbal cues and physical guidance from Practice #1 and #2. Remember to slowly fade out the prompts.

Practice backward chaining: Parents complete all but the last step of zipping, allowing the child to finish pulling the zipper up. Once successful, have the child complete the last two steps, by holding the bottom of the jacket and pulling the zipper up. Gradually add more steps until the child is able to complete the whole process from the beginning.

Have fun practicing!



Image courtesy: deliacreates