



Parent/Teacher Newsletter

Helping Hands Shoe Tying



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Allied Health – Edmonton Zone

Edition 3

SHIP Occupational Therapists give ideas to improve the fit between a student and the tasks they do at home and school. A good match can increase a child's belief in their abilities. This helps them have success on tasks they feel are important. In this month's newsletter, we review strategies for shoe tying.

Shoe Tying

Shoe tying is a complex task that takes much practice to master. It involves many developmental milestones including adequate range of motion, sensation, fine motor coordination, strength, right/left discrimination, sequencing, visual perception, memory, attention, concentration, interest and motivation.



Tips for Teaching

As students are required to tie their shoes several times a day it can be a frustrating task to both learn and teach.

Task Methods

1. **Forward Chaining** – begin with the first step of the task. Then teach sequential steps until they can perform all steps. This is a good method for

children who have difficulty with sequencing and generalizing skills.

2. **Backward Chaining** – demonstrate the entire task first. Repeat it, leaving out the last step for the child to complete. This method works well for students with low frustration tolerance or poor self esteem. It also gives the child early success.



Two Common Methods

1. **Bunny Ears**

- Make two loops ("bunny ears"), wrap one around the other and pull through.
- This knot is often easier for the student to tie but also comes undone easily, so teach the student a double knot.
- If the child has difficulty and holds the loop too far away from the knot, mark the two spots they should hold with a permanent marker pen.

2. **Standard Method**

- Make one loop, wrap the other lace around and pull through.
- This method is said to use less fine motor coordination

See website for photos demonstrating both of these methods

<http://www.fieggen.com/shoelace/twoloopknot.htm>

Warning

All shoelaces are not created equal. Round shoelaces often come undone easier than flat laces. The material the lace is made out of can also affect how long the lace will stay tied.

For more information contact
the therapist for your school.

Additional Tips

- Keep sessions short (10 minutes).
- Position yourself side by side.
- Keep distractions to a minimum.
- Tie the shoe off the foot but in the same direction as if you were wearing it (point toe away from you).
- Use two colors of shoelaces.
- Keep verbal cues to a minimum.
- Place small knots at the end of each lace so the laces do not slip out of the knot.
- Draw happy faces on the insides of their shoes. When shoes are on the correct feet, the happy faces meet.
- Offer lots of praise and encouragement.
- Short stories or rhymes may help (i.e. snake poem).



Snake Poem

Two snakes escaped from the zoo
and lived in the holes in my shoe!
In and out they twisted and fought,
'til their tails were tied in a knot.
One snake put his neck in a loop!
But his friend wrapped him round in a hoop!
Pull me out! Pull me out!
Cried the snake with a shout.
Through the hole pull me low!
And what do you know?
You've made a bow!

Adaptations

Shoe tying is a complex task that takes a while to master. You may want to try some of these adaptations in the mean time.

1. When the child is first learning, have them tie their shoes in just one or two situations. For example, use tie up shoes for recess and then use slip on shoes for indoors.
2. Elastic laces – there are two different types. Some are brightly colored and curly, allowing them to twist together instead of tying a bow. Some look like regular shoe laces if your child is concerned about this. (Consult your school's OT for more information.)

3. Slip on shoes.

4. Velcro shoes.



When using adaptations, particularly for recess and Physical Education, make sure that the shoe can be done up tight enough to support the child in gross motor activities. This is also important with tie up shoes. When shoes start to get worn out (i.e. the heel support/back is ragged and soft) they don't offer as much stability.

Further Resources

Book: "Shoe Tying Made Simple" by Kelly Wilk, Occupational Therapist, Junction of (OT) Function, Florida
<http://junctionof-ot-function.com>

References

<http://junctionof-ot-function.com>