

# GETTING DRESSED EXPLORATIONS: INFANTS – PRESCHOOLERS

**Every child is different, and these are only suggested adaptations and activities. Do what works best for encouraging your child to get dressed as independently as possible. Consult your pediatrician, physical therapist (PT), and/or occupational therapist (OT) first.**

Getting dressed is a wonderful opportunity for young children to build feelings of independence. It is also a wonderful opportunity to embed STEM learning opportunities, such as ***sequencing, relational concept, matching, or categorizing***.

Children learn new things when they practice them in everyday routines. Try one or two of the following activities to build the foundation for STEM learning while your child is getting dressed. Use these ideas to set up the environment and materials to best suit your child's needs.



Key STEM Learning:	<b><i>Science</i></b>	<b><i>Computational Thinking</i></b>	<b><i>Engineering</i></b>	<b><i>Math</i></b>
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Note: STEM concepts are highlighted in **bold** and *italicized*. At the STEMIE center, technology refers to computational thinking.

Technology is the introduction of underlying concepts of building or creating technology, including computational thinking, which is the basic logic underlying computer science (U.S. Department of Ed/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

## Adaptations:

### *What can I do to support my child's learning?*

#### Access/Environment:

- Ensure your child is sitting or standing in a stable position while putting on clothes. If your child needs support in maintaining balance in sitting or standing posture, you can try:
  - Letting your child sit/stand against the wall/corner
  - Letting your child sit/stand on a firm surface



## Adaptations:

### *What can I do to support my child's learning?*

#### Materials:

- Clothes that are loose, tagless and/or have elastic that are comfortable for your child
- Clothes that have large buttons, and buttonholes or use Velcro
- Use adaptive devices (e.g., Reacher, sock aid, dressing stick) to help children pick up, put on, or take off clothes)
- Use braille tags to help children with visual impairments find or organize the clothes



## Adaptations:

### *What can I do to support my child's learning?*

#### **Interactions/Instruction:**

Note: Communication may include the use of words, signs, gestures, and different types of cues (e.g., touch, movement, visual, etc.)

- Use visual/braille cues for each step of getting ready
- Use modeling, hand over hand or hand under hand to guide children how to dress/undress.
- Give your child time to respond to changing
- Smile and communicate with your child at eye level.
- Speak/sign slowly, emphasize keywords, and wait for a response.
- Praise your child's efforts with words, facial expression, or body language.



## Exploration: *Baby Changes (Infants)*

**Key STEM Learning:**

*Science*

*Computational Thinking*

**Description:** Narrate what you are doing *first/next*, and *body parts* as you change your infant whether it is in the morning, after a diaper change, or getting ready to go outside. You may say, "First I'm going to put the hat on your head, then I'm going to help you put mittens on your hands."

### **What My Child Is Learning!**

Getting dressed is an important routine that children engage daily. During this time, infants learn by observing what is going on and interacting with their caregivers. By describing your actions and their *body parts*, you are not just helping them make sense of new information and learn sequencing but establishing positive relationships with them.



## Exploration: *Getting Dressed (Toddlers)*

**Key STEM Learning:**

*Science*

*Computational Thinking*

*Math*

**Description:** Talk about what items they are taking off and putting back on which **body parts**. Talk about where to put clothes after they are worn. Ask which clothes/items cover their **feet, leg, body, arm**, etc.

### **What My Child Is Learning!**

Help children build strong connections with the world and experiences by extending their explorations. After narrating, start introducing simple questions to help your children use previously learned information to find answers. Invite them to ask their own questions and conduct their own experiment. For example, you may ask, **'What might happen if we put socks on our hands/hat on our feet.'** And allow them to try and find the answers.



## Exploration:

### ***What should we do next? Can you help? (Toddlers)***

**Key STEM Learning:**

***Science***

***Computational Thinking***

***Engineering***

***Math***

**Description:** Give your child a chance to help out by simply asking “Mommy is feeling ***cold. Can you help me find my socks?*** We are going to the park. What do we ***need to wear before we go out, so we won’t get sunburned?***”

### **What My Child Is Learning!**

By encouraging your children to become a little helper, we are not just preparing them to become a responsible citizen but setting them up for success. Moreover, through helping, your child can practice different STEM concepts, such as ***sorting and categorizing clothes, sequencing, counting, relational concepts, how the button/zipper works.***



## Exploration:

### *I can do it all by myself (Older Toddlers & Preschoolers)*

Key STEM  
Learning:

Science

**Description:** Encourage children to organize the clothes or find the clothes they want to wear for the day. You may pose questions such as, **'Why did you choose this jacket?' 'What would happen if you didn't wear enough clothes?' 'What types of clothes do we wear in summer/winter?' 'I wonder what we should pack to go stay over with Grandma for 2 days. It will be very warm there! How many shirts should we pack?'**

### What My Child Is Learning!

Encourage your child to **choose or organize their own clothes** can help them develop independence and build their **scientific reasoning and thinking skills**. You can do this **by integrating questions and problems for your children to solve**.

Children's STEM learning starts with curiosity. Use questions to guide their investigations and advance their scientific discoveries.

Remember to encourage them to explain and report their findings, which is also an important scientific inquiry process.

