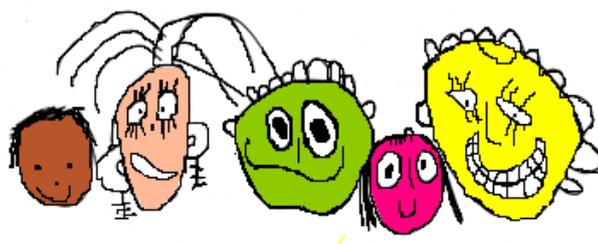


## Hamilton Community Pre-School

*"Where discoveries, learning and fun connect."*



### Information Sheets for Parents

# Supporting Independence

At Preschool the children are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves, their belongings, their decisions and choices. This involves but is not limited to such things as putting their own Morning tea and lunch in designated areas, packing away their belongings, putting on their own pants, answering their own questions (through both exploration and thinking), packing away areas they have played at and putting away their own craft. Sometimes in our daily lives it can be quicker to just answer their questions or do it for them, but in taking the time and opportunity you can support the increase of independence and build confidence in their own ability. In the long run this will also help you, a lot! This involves encouraging each child to 'HAVE A GO' at new things. For example, 'I can't put my own pants on...' suggest sitting down and trying and if you need help I am right here.

Giving children a chance to practice self-help skills is a fantastic way to help them feel capable and increase their self-esteem. It helps create a great sense of autonomy, a drive to learn and grow. It is important for a child to develop these skills in preparation for big school. Independence is also an opportunity for children to feel in charge of their body and know that they are trusted by their parents.

Children are unique and reach the ability to complete these skills at different paces, these lists are meant as helpful guidelines. Allowing children to explore these skills, possibly fail and try again usually is the route to true learning. Finding the balance between giving freedom for children to learn and swooping in to the rescue is tricky at times but when we trust the process it's amazing just how much children can do.

As the child advances in age they can continue to maintain past responsibilities as well as assuming new ones. Tasks that are the child's own personal responsibility, such as making their bed, or tidying their room, we should no longer do for them. Tasks that help the whole family may be rotated, or a choice of chores may be given. This list, meant to suggest possibilities, is only a starting point subject to the situation and creativity of the adult.

## AGE APPROPRIATE HOME RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILDREN

3 year olds	4 year olds	5 year olds
Dress self (may need some help, esp. with buttons & zippers)	All of the skills for the 3 year old	All of the skills for the 3 & 4 year old
Practice using Snaps, zippers and buttons	Sitting to look at a book independently	Dress independently (may still wish for help, but in general capable of doing alone)
Put on shoes (it's helpful to avoid laces)	Understanding common dangers of hot objects, stairs, glass	Brush hair and teeth independently
Explore what weather appropriate clothing means	Feeding self without difficulty	Explore tying laced shoes
Wipe up own spills (helps to keep towels stored where child can reach)	Taking shoes and socks off	Use the kitchen sink with confidence to wash fruits, veggies, plates, cups
Remove own plate from table	Knowing where familiar items are kept	Explore more cooking skills (peeling vegetables with supervision, chopping ingredients with safe knife)
Get a snack from the pantry (Try to keep healthy choices in reach)	Attempting to brush teeth	Learn about emergency numbers (how to dial for police & fire)
Help set table	Dressing and undressing self (only requiring assistance with laces, buttons, and other fasteners in awkward places)	Independently packing items away
Using toilet and having daytime control	Toileting independently	Settling independently for sleep
Settling themselves to sleep at night or during the day	Taking turns	Settling themselves to sleep at night
Distinguishing between urination and bowel movements, and names them correctly	Able to hold a fork and spoon like an adult.	Packing a bag for school or other outings with assistance
Using a serviette to wipe face and hands	Explore more cooking skills (cracking eggs alone, making simple sandwich, cutting banana slices)	Opening lunch boxes, zip lock bags, food packaging
Unbuttoning large buttons	Set / remove own place setting at table	following teacher instruction, and working independently
Morning routine at school (putting bag away, putting drink bottle in correct spot etc)	Following rules	Coping in busy/noisy environment

## Parents can support children's Independence by:-

- Giving the child many opportunities and encouragement to do things for themselves and others
- Praise them for their efforts to help for themselves, even when their attempts are not entirely successful
- Accepting their interest in trying new tasks and skills and giving support only when needed.
- Avoiding stopping them from trying new tasks
- Allowing the child enough time to do things for themselves, without having the pressure of having to hurry
- Encouraging them to ask for help if they need it, and avoid taking over from the child if he/she is having trouble or are too slow
- Breaking new and more complex tasks down into smaller steps that can be either explained or demonstrated to the child.
- Creating a reward chart for independent completion of tasks (or attempt at, in the early stages).
- Routine: Use the *same* routine or strategy each time you complete the same task to help them learn it faster.
- Consistency: Be consistent with the words and signs used to assist the child,

## What activities can help improve Independence?

- **Small parts of activities:** Practice doing a small part of a task each day as it is easier to learn new skills in smaller sections.
- **Observation:** Have your child to observe other family members performing everyday self help skills.
- **Role play:** self help tasks such as eating, dressing or brushing teeth with teddy bears. Doing it on others can help learning it before then doing it on yourself.
- **Take help of others:** Allow the child to brush your hair or teeth first, before brushing their own.
- **Timers** to indicate how long they must persist an activity they may not enjoy, such as teeth cleaning.

## What other problems can occur when you see difficulties with Independence skills?

When a child has self help difficulties, they might also have difficulties with:

- **Following instructions:** The ability to understand and be able to initiate the tasks to be done as per requested by others.
- **Receptive language (understanding)**
- **Eating:** The physical skill of using cutlery in an age appropriate manner as well as eating a good range of food.
- **Sleeping:** Being able to independently settle and resettle to get to sleep.
- **Dressing and undressing** or assisting with dressing to an age appropriate level and recognising what articles of clothing go where and in what order.
- **Social skills:** Determined by the ability to engage in mutual friendships with others (either verbally or non-verbally), to compromise with others, and be able to recognize and follow social norms.
- **Fine motor skills:** Finger and hand skills such as opening lunch boxes, tying shoelaces, doing up buttons.
- **Gross motor skills:** Whole body physical skills using the 'core' strength muscles of the trunk, arms, legs such as getting on and off the toilet and standing to dress.
- **Organisation:** The ability to know what a task involves, the materials required, how to collate them such as packing the bag for preschool or even getting dressed.
- **Learning new tasks** and retaining that information for the next time the task is done again.
- **Executive functioning:** Higher order reasoning and thinking skills.