

Is not yet age-related independent when dressing or undressing.

Learning to dress and undress is an important self-care skill that helps children develop independence, confidence, and self-esteem. Children develop these skills at different rates, but regular opportunities to practice supports their growing independence. Encouraging children to take part in dressing and undressing routines helps them develop the fine and gross motor skills needed to manage clothing, fastenings, and personal belongings. These early self-help skills are an important part of preparing children for school and everyday life.

Practitioners can support children by:

- Encouraging children to do as much as possible for themselves, providing help only when needed and gradually reducing support as their skills develop.
- Teaching dressing skills one step at a time, for example fastening a zip after an adult has started it.
- Demonstrating skills from the child's perspective, such as fastening zips or buttons while standing behind them.
- Allowing plenty of time for children to practice dressing and undressing without feeling rushed.
- Starting with clothing that has larger, easier-to-manage fastenings, such as large buttons, Velcro, or chunky zips.
- Using adaptations, such as ribbons attached to zip pulls, to make fastenings easier to grasp.
- Helping children identify the front and back of clothing using visual markers, labels, or coloured tags.
- Breaking down dressing tasks into small, achievable steps and celebrating success at each stage.
- Teaching the final step first and then gradually introducing earlier steps as the child's confidence grows.
- Providing regular opportunities to practice dressing and undressing through daily routines and play.
- Giving specific praise and encouragement, such as, "You pulled up your zip by yourself" or "You put your coat on independently."
- Working in partnership with parents and carers to support the development of dressing skills at home and in the setting.

Activities, ideas, resources and strategies

- Offer dressing-up clothes to give children opportunities to practice dressing and undressing through play. This could include role-play costumes or local school uniforms
- Use dolls, teddies, and dressing frames with zips, buttons, buckles, and Velcro fastenings for children to practise dressing skills
- Sing action songs and rhymes that encourage children to identify and move different body parts, such as reaching behind their backs, stretching, and crossing the midline
- Incorporate dressing skills into everyday routines, encouraging children to have a go before offering support
- Use visual prompts or step-by-step picture guides to support children in dressing and undressing independently
- Play games that develop fine motor control, such as playdough, construction toys, tweezers, and finger rhymes
- Celebrate children's efforts and achievements to build confidence and motivation