

Shoe Tying and OT

Can your child tie their shoes independently?

- By 6 years old a child should be able to tie their shoes by themselves
- Current research demonstrates that some children are lagging behind in this skill since the pandemic began (Natanson,2022).
- Occupational therapists can help your child meet this milestone by improving their fine motor skills



The ability to tie shoes includes:

- Fine motor dexterity
- Bilateral coordination
- Hand-eye coordination
- Attention
- Core muscle strength
- Finger isolation
- Motor planning
- Visual discrimination

How to improve my child's shoe tying skills?

- Have them practice with the shoe *off* their foot first. once they master tying laces that way, then they can practice tying them when the shoes are on their feet. They can also practice on a shoe tying board so they can motor plan without the pressure of having to succeed right away.
- Use two different color laces to make them easier to differentiate. This will help with visual discrimination.
- Try using wider and/or thicker and stiffer laces first so those little fingers can grasp them more easily.



Shoe Tying and OT

How to improve my child's shoe tying skills? (Cont.)

- Have your child build their hand and finger strength by helping around the house with chores like folding socks, hanging laundry with clothespins, and opening doors with manual keys.
- Take pictures of yourself or your child doing each step of shoe tying, and create a visual aid that they can reference to remember the steps. You can make this into an activity where they have to put the pictures in order, which will help them learn it faster. Take it up a notch by having them grasp the pictures with a clothespin or similar clip and they will increase their finger dexterity at the same time.
- There are two main shoe tying methods: the one loop and two loop or "bunny ear" method. If one method isn't working for your child, try the other one and they may find it less difficult.
- Some children will benefit from mastering each step before moving on to the full task. Practicing often, along with encouragement for each small success will help them achieve this skill.

