

A guide on how to help your child with shoes laces



Many children experience difficulty with learning to tie their shoe laces. Lack of experience, through Velcro fastening etc, can also delay this skill. There are many different skills which are required for your child to tie their laces. For example: stable posture, use of two hands together, finger dexterity, ability to plan and sequence actions, judging tightness of pull and good visual skills. There are different methods and techniques to learn, so use the one that suits you.

Some ideas to begin with:

Practice tying in different positions and situations, e.g. Pyjama cord or track suit bottoms (drawstring around waist). Or try holding a shoe on a table or held between knees.

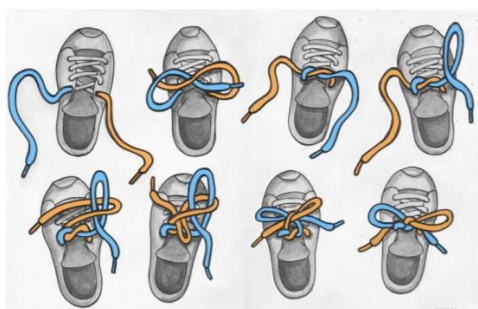
- Try thicker laces initially
- Try 'firmer' laces e.g. laces with a waxy coating, rather than slippy nylon
- Try 'flat' laces, rather than round laces
- Try 2 different coloured laces to help see the left and right lace separately

Strategies and Approaches:

- Break the task down into manageable steps, to enable your child to experience success at each stage.
- Try 'backward chaining'- This is where your child completes the last part of the task (e.g. you get the knot ready and your child pulls it tight). This is more motivating to experience success at the end of the task. Then gradually begin to encourage them to do a bit more each time if they are managing.
- Have your child sit in front of you, facing away from you so that your hands are in the same position as theirs when demonstrating the task or practicing hand over hand.

Methods:

1. Standard Technique (See Diagram below)



You may find it useful to say the words out loud whilst carrying out the actions:

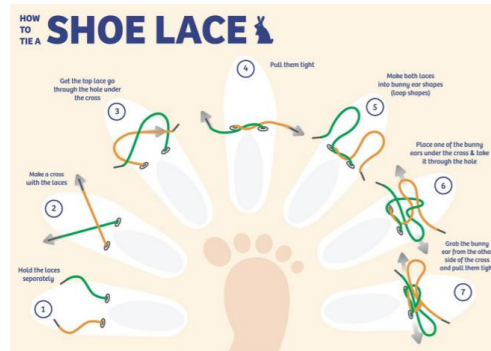
“Here’s two laces, Cross them over, One goes under and pull, Make a loop with finger and thumb, The other goes round, Through the hole and Pull”,

Or, depending on the age of the child, try:

The ‘bunny rhyme’ e.g. Make the initial knot, then: “Make a tree, Bunny runs round, Pokes its nose through the hole, Got him!”

Information from Forth Valley NHS Foundation Trust Children’s Occupational Therapy

2. Two Loop Trying/ Bunny Ears (See Diagram Below)



Alternatives:

You may find that some children are not able to cope with the demands of tying laces (particularly when rushing during school time). Some ideas to aid independence could be the following, which can be purchased at most supermarkets or online:

- Curly/coil laces
- 'No bow' laces
- Elastic laces - permanently tied, foot slips in and out of the shoe
- Buckles and Velcro fastenings

One-handed method for tying shoe laces:

For children who have functional use of only one hand, the following method may be worth trying, but will require some practice.

- Lace shoe as shown in the diagram below. The shoe lace is knotted from the inside at the one of the top holes. It is then laced straight across the shoe moving downwards towards the final hole near the toes, and ends up on the inside edge.
- Child holds shoe lace and slips it under the last cross lacing. They then make a loop and pass it over and through the hole, pulling it tighter, by moving it from side to side.
- Tuck in the end.

