

Shoelaces

You don't have to get in a knot!

Learning to tie shoelaces independently is difficult for all children – it takes a combination of skills including:

- gross motor skills (shoulder stability to hold your arms steady while you work on fiddly things)
- fine motor skills (to get your fingers to do what you want them to do)
- eye-hand co-ordination (eyes and hands working together properly)
- visual discrimination (to tell which lace is which and where it should go next)
- sequencing (to do it in the right order)
- concentration and attention (to keep focused until the task is finished)

It's no wonder children find it tricky! And if a child has a learning disability or co-ordination difficulties, the task can seem impossible. But there are ways and means, tips and tricks to help, regardless of the age or ability of a child.

So, where do you start?

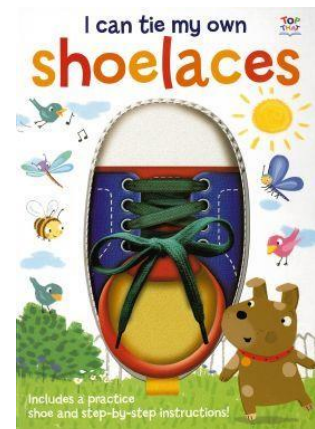
Is your child ready and interested? Yes? Great, skip to the next section.

No? Try 'backward chaining' to give the feeling of success, and the motivation to try. Backward chaining is when you do all the steps but leave the last one for your child to do. For shoelaces, it might be simply encouraging your child to pull the loops tight. After a few times, leave the last two steps to your child, and so on, as you work backwards through the steps.

Ready and interested...

Use a dressing doll, book, or a large shoe to start. Practise on their knee or table top – it's easier than on their foot to begin with.

Use rhymes to help a child learn and recall the sequence. You can find lots of examples on YouTube, such as <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOdOkNFjFks>





Use different coloured or contrasting laces to help children discriminate between left and right. You can find them on Amazon here: <https://amzn.to/2J30bW3>

Use alternative shoelace tying methods – there are various strategies available, depending on your preference:

Modified method – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqPCGGHoxsE>

The bunny ears method – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsydRalh0ow>

The one second method – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMuNjnNyaiA>

Practice and patience...

But, what if you run out of both? Well, there are still alternatives. Velcro fastenings and slip on shoes are possibilities. For older kids though, these may become too immature.

Consider no-tie shoelaces – silicone strips which stretch to let the foot in to the shoe and out again; or elasticated laces which tighten and loosen with a quick-release button. Both are easily available on Amazon – search for ‘easy tie laces’.



Unrelated practice...

If low muscle tone contributes to weak shoulders, arm or hand muscles, fiddly tasks are very fatiguing. Build strength by practising crawling, push ups against a wall, or helping with the shopping bags.

