

Can Work Independently

What does “Can Work Independently” mean?

This skill is about a child’s ability to work alone on a task given by an adult. The task should be something that children understand and are able to do by themselves without the adult constantly monitoring or reminding them what to do. A child that demonstrates this skill stays focused and tries to do the task alone or with the help of a peer before asking for help from the adult. This skill is important because it helps children build the confidence and ability to work on their own.

TIPS for FAMILIES

How can I explain this skill to my child?

Let your child know that as they keep growing up, they are going to learn to do things on their own. For example, when they were babies, they couldn’t walk or feed themselves. You had to help them. But now they do those things for themselves. Tell them that they will keep learning how to do new things until they are able to do lots of things for themselves! Give them an example of something they are still learning how to do but will one day be able to do on their own (like tie their shoes). Express excitement over the fact that they will be able to do that task without any help some day (for example, say: “Imagine that! One day, I won’t have to help you tie your shoes anymore. You will be able to do it all by yourself!). Let them know that you are always there to help them when they are learning something new. Once they get better at it, they won’t need as much help and soon they will be doing a lot of things for themselves!

What are some things I can do to help my child learn this skill?

TIP1

Independent task list. Knowing your child’s ability level can help you identify which tasks they are able to do on their own and which tasks they still need your support to do. Create a list, like the one below, with two columns naming tasks that your child is capable of doing on their own and tasks you

need to help them with. It can also be helpful to brainstorm this list with your child so they feel some ownership over the things they can do alone. Post this list somewhere you and your child will see it every day. As your child learns how to do things on their own, you can move tasks from the second column to the first column. This way your child can see their progress as they master new skills!

Things I Can Do by Myself!	Things I Still Need Some Help to Do
 Brush my teeth	 Wake up for school
 Make my bed	 Get dressed
 Eat my breakfast	 Tie my shoes
 Put on my coat	 Pack my backpack

TIP2

Think like Goldilocks. In a children’s story, a little girl named Goldilocks tastes three bowls of food. One is “too hot”, one is “too cold”, and one is “just right”. For children to learn how to do things by themselves, they need tasks that they are able to work on alone. That means the task shouldn’t be too easy or too hard. Try to identify tasks that are “just right” for your child to do on their own.

Child’s Ability	Too Easy	Too Hard	Just Right
Your child can write the letters A, B, and C and is learning to write D and E.	You ask your child to write the letter A.	You ask your child to write the whole alphabet.	You ask your child to write A, B, C, D, and E. If your child is struggling to write D and E, you let them work through it on their own before you offer help.

TIP3

Make time. To help your child learn to do things on their own, it is important to build extra time for them into daily routines. For example, if you help them get dressed in the morning, that may only take 5 minutes. If they get dressed themselves, it may take 15 minutes. If you are rushing to get out the door, you may be tempted to do the task for the child, instead of letting them do it on their own. Think about your schedule and places where you can build in extra time to let your child try to do things on their own. For example, if your typical morning routine takes 30 minutes, wake your child up ten minutes early so they have extra time to try getting dressed on their own. Nights and weekends can also be useful times for letting your child try something on their own because you won’t be as rushed. Remember that learning to do something on your own can take time and hard work. Don’t be discouraged if your child doesn’t master a skill right away. Keep giving them chances to try it on their own before you help them.

How can I encourage my child when I see them trying to learn this skill?

Acknowledge your child for their efforts! For example, say, “Ling, I saw you working really hard to do that all by yourself” or “You did a great job playing on your own, Kevin.”

To learn more about the tips and where they came from, please visit our references page: ckphilly.org/citations