

Help Children Learn to Tie their Shoes

How to Teach Kids and Children to Tie Shoes and Sneakers

By: R. Renée Bembry

Learning to tie their own sneakers is like one of the milestones of preschool life. After learning to walk and muddling their way through the terrible twos, preschoolers learn to count to ten, to recite the alphabet, to recognize numbers and letters, and with the right encouragement and guidance, many even learn to read and write.

Sneaker tying, despite its apparent simpleness once mastered, requires a different type of thought, hand-eye-coordination, and an aspect of fingers-to-string manipulation most kids do not encounter until shoe tying enters their lives. Since movements involved with shoe tying require more than symbol recognition or moving pencils across pieces of paper, a different level of concentration and direction following are necessary in order for children to accomplish this goal. Although children can pretty much learn to tie between ages three and five, some children have more difficulty mastering the skill and may not fully get the hang of it until age six.

The first tip for teaching kids to tie their sneakers is to recognize that hand eye coordination plays a major role in accomplishing this task. Although older children and adults can tie their shoes without looking, when they learned how to tie, they had to look to see what they were doing. Later on, after the skill is mastered for awhile, the fingers simply know what to do and one will be able to tie without looking; or even thinking much about the task for that matter.

Therefore, in helping children with the hand-eye-coordination aspect of shoe tying, tie your shoes while they watch to see what you are doing. It is easier for them to see how you tie your own shoe than it is for them to see how to tie theirs because the visual angle will be different.

Continue the process as follows:

After a child watches you tie *your* shoes, have him or her watch you tie *their* shoes.

Take your shoes a loose and have kids take their shoes a loose.

Loosen the strings near the eyelets and tell kids to do the same.

Having kids untie and loosen their strings may not seem like much, but it helps familiar kids with the feel of manipulating strings while at the same time assures them they have control over the strings.

Holding the left end of the shoe string in your left hand and the right end of the string in your right hand, pull the strings straight up so your sneaker tightens around your foot again. Have the child do the same.

Now cross your right string over your left string and transfer your right string to your right hand and your left string to your left hand. Have the child imitate these actions while telling him or her to do just as I have told you – which so far consists of (1) “Hold your left string in your left hand and your right string in your right hand. (2) Pull the strings so your sneaker feels tight on your foot. (3) Cross your right string over your left string and trade your left string for your right string.

After kids transfer hands strings are in, point out the cross or “x” the strings are making when the right strings passes

over the left string. Now tell them to squeeze the strings together with their left thumb and pointer (index finger). Do the same with your string while they watch you. You should squeeze the strings about an inch or two away from the sneaker.

After you and the kid are squeezing the strings with your left appendages, show the kid the hole that is created by holding the strings together. Have the child point to his or her hole using their right hand-they can let string in right hand go.

Now, use your right index finger to push the overlapping string through the hole. Tell the child to do the same and then, using your thumb and your middle finger, pull the string all the way through the hole. Tell the child to do the same, "Pull the string all the way through the hole."

Now tighten the "first" tie created by pulling the left string with the left hand and the right string with right hand. Tell child to do the same, "Pull the strings in your hands until it feels tight on your foot."

Now... making bows is the trickiest part of sneaker tying. For this reason, it is often a good idea to have children formulate "half bows" and tie their sneaker bows using the single string technique. When they get better at tying, it will be easier for them to learn how to make bows using the one bow at a time method.

So, for now, have the child loop each string into a half bow and then hold the left half bow in his or her left hand and the right half bow in his or her right hand. You do the same. All tiers use about one-third the length of string to make half bows. In addition, bows should begin as close to sneakers as possible in order to prevent final bows from sagging.

Okay... teacher and kids cross half bows in right hands with half bows in left hands. Cross left bows over right bows. Hold bows together with left forefingers and thumbs. Use right

index fingers to push left bows into holes made while holding half bows together; and then, pull half bows using right forefingers and thumbs. Now all you have to do is hold each bow firmly [left with left forefinger and thumb – right with right forefinger and thumb] and pull them a bit more so they are tight on the sneaker.

Voila! The kid has tied his or her shoe... and so has the teacher! When shoe tying teacher and or child is left-handed, reverse hands in which each step takes place.