

## CARE & LEARNING SERVICE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ADVICE FOR

### SHOELACES

If your child is finding tying shoelaces difficult the following suggestions may be helpful:

- In order for a child to learn, they must be **motivated** in the first place. A child will lose interest if the task is too challenging or if it is continually done for them. Give your child incentive to learn through praise for completing individual parts well and reward.
- When your child is ready to do laces teach each stage separately. You may want to try the “double loop” method which is easier than the usual one.
- **Play games** with string and rope to get your child used to manipulating string in their fingers.
- Use **backward chaining** – this is when the child completes the last stage of a task, eg pulling the bow tight. Once they have mastered this, introduce the stage just before. This gives them a sense of achievement and motivates them to keep trying.
- Sit in a comfortable, balanced position, with your back against something. Work somewhere where you can sit alongside each other, not facing each other.
- Practice laces with the shoe on your lap rather than on the foot. You can purchase an inexpensive plastic shoe lacing toy from a shop. Once your child has got some idea about the task, it is easier for your child to see what they are doing if they are seated with their foot (and shoe) on a small stool or chair in front of them.
- Practice in **short but frequent sessions**, eg 10mins a day.
- Use the **same instructions/wording** every time.
- Practice knots and bows on things other than just shoes, eg tying up food packages, dressing gown cord.



- Wrapping presents is a great way to practice knot tying. Have your child keep some important toys/items in a box. Each day they can untie the box to take out the toy and then retie it to put it away.
- Watch **videos** or look at **pictures**. There are lots of different websites that help break down knots into stages. One of the best for shoelaces is <http://www.fieggen.com/shoelace/knots.htm> who also has an app available for smart phones.
- Using **different coloured laces** can be useful so the child can distinguish between the two as they give an added visual cue.
- You may want to try the 'double loop' method as some people find this easier than the standard one.

### ALTERNATIVES:

- Try Velcro fastenings, toggles or elasticised shoe laces (perhaps together with a shore horn). There are lots of different options available over the internet or in running or sports shops.
- Run4IT in Inverness sells a set of lock laces for £5.
- Ask your occupational therapist for further advice if you would like to work on this more.

