



GIVING UP THE BOTTLE



Adapted from: Good Behavior - Over 1,200 Sensible Solutions to Your Child's Problems from Birth to Age Twelve
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Eventually, your child must give up his bottle and start drinking exclusively from a cup. When that time comes is up to you, and it's not unusual for parents to have a more difficult time doing it than the child does. Parents usually worry that their child won't get enough milk. It's true that most children who love their bottle do drink less from a cup, but a one-year-old needs only sixteen ounces a day and a two- to three-year-old does very well on eighteen ounces a day. Besides, he will be eating other dairy products, too.

Once you make the big decision to give up the bottle, there are ways to make it easier and less traumatic for both of you.

Plan Ahead

- You can help your child give up the bottle by never letting him become too dependent on it in the first place. What this means is that the baby should depend on you for his security rather than the bottle. Don't prop it for him, but instead, hold him while he drinks. In fact, even when he learns to hold the bottle himself, it is advisable to hold him as much as possible.
- Don't use the bottle as a pacifier, because that, too, will make him more dependent on it for comfort.
- Never give him the bottle in his crib, when he's going to sleep. This can be the cause of extensive tooth decay.
- Show him how to drink from a cup at six months. Offer him the cup at mealtime so he'll start developing the skill. Give him his own bright-colored cup that he will recognize, perhaps one with a spill-proof lid or a weighted bottom.

Decide on the Timing

- Usually, it's up to you to make the decision about when your baby should give up her bottle, though you may want to ask your pediatrician and dentist for their advice. If your toddler shows diminishing interest in her bottle, take advantage of it. Otherwise, pick a day and go for it. Choose a time when nothing out of the ordinary is going on. Once you make the decision, you must stick with it, and before you realize it, your child will have graduated to a cup.
- Try these techniques separately or in combination:
 - ⇒ Dilute the bottle. Two weeks before B day, start diluting the milk or juice in the bottle by adding water to make it less tasty to her. At the same time, start offering her undiluted milk or juice from a cup and encouraging her to drink it.
 - ⇒ Change nipples. Switch from the old familiar kind of nipple to a new shape and size.
- Stick with your plan. Once you've set forth on your mission, don't falter! Don't worry - it won't traumatize the child if she's weaned in a day. Tell her she's a big girl now and it's time to send the bottles to a little baby, who needs them. Let her help you pack them up, making an event out of it. Then get rid of the bottles and don't backslide. Even if she cries loud and long for her bottle, hold out. If you give in, you'll prolong the situation and make it more difficult for both of you later on.
- Shower her with praise. When she drinks from her cup, tell her what a big girl she is and how proud you are of her. What a fantastic achievement!