



Mask Wearing: Tips & Tricks

KEEP IT COOL: Masks are hard in the heat! Get your toddler started by wearing a mask inside, in the air conditioning. Wear the mask along with your child and engage together in quiet activities that do not require much talking or heavy breathing — puzzles, drawing, watching a show, or playing with blocks or dolls.

BUSY FINGERS: Offer a fidget to keep your child's fingers busy when they start wearing a mask. This is to offer their fingers an engaging activity so they do not creep up and start fidgeting with their mask. Try a squishy ball, a favorite stuffed animal, or a finger toy.

JAZZ IT UP: Bring the masks to the art table or wherever your child has space to draw. They can add stickers, googly eyes, glitter, or even just draw right on the mask (use materials that can be laundered). This makes the mask fun and unique to them. They (or you) can write their name on it, so it truly becomes their mask.

GET PLAYFUL: Leave some masks among your child's toys. They can dress up their dolls, action figures, construction trucks, or other items with the masks. The National Zoo had masks on their lion statues all year and Child's Play had their toy statue on the sidewalk masked up. See what other playful masks you and your child can spot.

STAY CALM: When putting your child's mask on, have them look up at you and ask them to gently close their eyes. Gently loop the mask on their ears and pull it up over their nose.

GET LOW: Keep your child's masks in a location where they can get the mask for themselves instead of you handing it to them from an adult-level hook on the wall or inside your bag. Think about a small mask basket on top of a shoe rack, a hook on the wall below your key rack, or even on a nightstand next to your child's bed. Ownership and accessibility matter!

STAY POSITIVE: Try to stay away from connecting mask wearing with any punitive measures or missing out on activities. When we say, "If you don't wear your mask, you can't go to the



playground,” all the child hears is, “Don’t wear your mask” and, “Can’t go to the playground.” Instead try, “When you wear your mask we will go to the playground,” or, “First you put on your mask and then we leave for the playground.” Your toddler’s cause-and-effect processing is not yet fully developed but they do great with two step sequences. We recommend staying away from consequences and instead use when/then or first/then sentences.

PATIENCE IS EVERYTHING: Stay positive, stay hopeful. Time and patience are always our strongest tools when working with young children and new skills or comfort levels. We are playing the long game; just because they refuse to wear the mask in July or August does not mean they always will. Do not push too hard – your toddler may push back just as hard, ratcheting up the tension around the mask and leaving you both frustrated. Keep it breezy, keep it casual, and eventually they will adopt the practice.

USE YOUR EXPERTS: So you’re trying these strategies and it’s just not working? Getting worried about the fall? You’ve got this! And you have us – [reach out to Gan leadership](#) and we will connect with you one-on-one to talk it through. We are here to support you and your child as you get ready for school.

Mask Wearing: Social Stories

At the Gan, we often use Social Stories as a tool to support young children. Social stories are visual and written explanations told in story form that are used to introduce new concepts, experiences, and expectations as well as decrease anxiety. They were initially created by Carol Gray as a tool to use with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. We have found that Social Stories are useful for all children and we use them frequently in our classrooms.

We recommend that you print out the social stories to read with your child or go through them together on a mobile device – whichever works best for your family!

[Masks at the Gan \(written by Stephanie Slater\)](#)

[Wearing a Mask to School](#)



Recommended Masks for Children

If you do not yet have masks for your toddler or are looking for some new ones, we have heard from families and educators that the following masks are successful for toddlers:

[Reusable masks](#)

[Disposable masks](#)