Toothbrushing Learning Pack

A picture book, picture cards and ideas for parents















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How to use this pack

1. Read the story. Read "Lina Learns to Brush Her Teeth" together at a calm time, so your child can see what will happen.

2. Put up the schedule. Stick the schedule on the wall near the basin and point to each picture as you go.

3. Practise together. Show each step, do it together, then step back a little at a time.

You don't need to use everything at once. Choose what helps your child, and go at your child's pace.



A free picture book to read together

Read it before brushing, one page at a time.

Created by Sensory Lab

This book belongs to

How to read this book together

- Read it at a calm time, or just before brushing, as a preview of what will happen.
- Point to each picture and pause. Give your child time to look, point or show you.
- Read the same way each time. Familiar words help the routine feel safe.
- Short on time or energy? Read only the pages your child likes, or see the fewer-steps idea at the back of the book.



Sami has brushed his teeth.

Now it is Lina’s turn.



Mum shows Lina two toothbrushes.

Lina points to the coral one.



Mum puts a little toothpaste on the brush.

Just a pea-sized dot.



First, Mum brushes her own teeth.

Lina watches.



Lina copies Mum.

Top teeth, then bottom teeth.



Mum gently helps Lina’s hand.

Small, gentle circles.



Now Lina brushes on her own.

Mum waits and smiles.

There’s no rush.



Lina spits out the toothpaste.

No rinsing!



Lina puts her brush back in the cup.



Lina taps “all done” on her tablet.

Mum smiles: “Well done, Lina!”



At bedtime, Lina brushes again with Dad.

Same steps, every day.

For parents: how this book teaches

Lina's story follows four simple ideas you can use at home. Go at your child's pace: every child is different.

1. Show first (demonstration)

Get down to your child's level, face to face, and brush your own teeth slowly, with small, gentle circles. Your child learns by watching. You don't need many words.

2. Same steps, every day (repetition)

Use the same steps, in the same order, at the same times each day: last thing at night and one other time. Reading this book first can help your child know what comes next.

3. Gentle help, only if your child is happy with it

If your child likes it, rest your hand lightly over theirs to show the movement. Never hold or force. If your child pulls away, stop, and go back to watching and copying. That is enough.

4. Step back slowly (gradual independence)

Lower your own brush and let your child lead, while you stay close and watch. A sand timer shows how long brushing lasts, about two minutes. Smile, wait, and celebrate the trying, not perfection.

Independence takes time

Even while your child is learning to brush on their own, they may still need an adult's help to clean their teeth thoroughly. That's normal. You might let your child brush first, then gently brush any areas they missed, if your child is comfortable with it. The NHS advises that parents brush the teeth of children under 3, supervise children aged 3 to 6, and keep watching children aged 7 and over to check they brush well and for long enough.

Every way of communicating counts

Lina doesn't use speech. She points, watches, copies and uses her tablet. Looking, pointing, handing you a card, using a communication device or speaking are all real answers.

Fewer steps

If the whole book is too much, read only pages 7 (toothpaste), 9 (brushing together) and 12 (spitting out).

NHS advice for children's teeth (UK)

- Brush twice a day for about 2 minutes: last thing at night before bed, and at least one other time.
- Ages 3 to 6: a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste (1,000 to 1,500ppm). 7 and over: 1,350 to 1,500ppm. Under 3: a smear (at least 1,000ppm).
- Spit out after brushing and don't rinse, so the fluoride keeps working. Keep watching, even at 7 and over.

Source: NHS, "Taking care of children's teeth" (nhs.uk; page last reviewed 30 June 2025), checked 31 October 2026. If brushing stays very difficult, your dentist or an occupational therapist can suggest more ideas.

My toothbrushing schedule

Sensory Lab













Point to each picture as you go. Same steps, every day.

Cut-out cards













Cut along the dashed lines. Laminate the cards, or cover them with clear sticky-back plastic.

For parents: using the picture cards

Using the cards

- Put the schedule on the wall at your child's eye level, near the basin.
- Point to each card as you reach that step. When a step is done, your child can touch the card, or turn over or move a cut-out card.
- Use the same cards, in the same order, every day.
- You don't need all six at once. Start with the steps your child needs most and add the others one at a time.

Show, practise together, then step back

1. Show me. Face to face, at your child's level, do each step yourself first, slowly: a pea-sized dot of toothpaste on your own brush, top teeth, then bottom teeth, in small, gentle circles, spit out, and put your brush in the cup.

2. Do it with me. Point to the card, then do the step at the same time as your child. If your child is happy with it, rest your hand lightly over theirs to show the movement. Never hold or force.

3. Let me try. Reduce your help a little at a time: from guiding the movement, to pointing at the card, to simply watching and smiling. Your child may still need you to help finish brushing thoroughly, and that's fine.

Step by step

- **1 Toothpaste on:** a pea-sized amount for children aged 3 and over; a smear for children under 3. You may want to do this step yourself at first.
- **2 and 3 Brush top teeth, brush bottom teeth:** small, gentle circles, including the gums and behind the teeth. About 2 minutes in total; a sand timer can help.
- **4 Spit out:** spit out the toothpaste, but don't rinse with water, so the fluoride keeps working.
- **5 Brush in cup:** putting the brush away ends the routine the same way every time.
- **6 All done:** let your child tell you they've finished in their own way: a sign, pointing to the card, a communication device or a word. Celebrate the trying, not perfection.

Making cards that last

- Cut along the dashed lines, then laminate the cards or cover them with clear sticky-back plastic. Leave a small clear border when you trim, so the edges stay sealed near water.
- Optional: stick a small piece of hook-and-loop tape on the back of each card, so your child can move each card to an "all done" strip.

Toothbrushing advice follows the NHS page "Taking care of children's teeth" (nhs.uk; last reviewed 30 June 2025), checked 31 October 2026. General education based on everyday parenting experience, not medical, dental, therapy or professional advice. Every child is different; go at your child's pace.

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