

# Going to the hairdresser

Having their hair cut should be an enjoyable experience for children, as well as an educational one, writes **Annette Rawstrone**



For an adult, a trip to the hairdresser or barber can be considered a pampering event or simply a necessary chore. Similarly for children, it can be an experience that they look forward to or something they dread. Preparing your child for a visit to the hairdresser will help to avoid upset and enable them to benefit from the real-life experience.

## Consider the practicalities

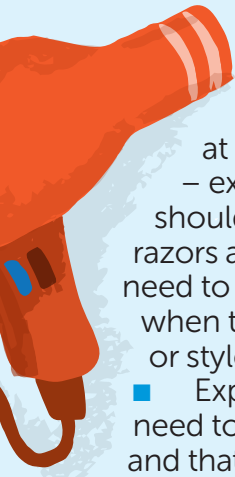
- An unknown person holding a pair of scissors near your head could be quite frightening, so chat to your

child beforehand about what's going to happen at the hairdresser and let them explore relevant storybooks.

- If possible, take your child to the hairdresser to watch you or a sibling having a quick trim or their hair braided before they are sat in the chair themselves. This will help them to know what to expect.
- Ask your child how they feel about going to the hairdresser, as this may flag up any anxieties – such as worry that it may hurt, or concern about their hair being shorter.
- When making the

appointment, think about when is a suitable time for your child – avoid when they normally have a nap or eat.

- Speak to the hairdresser about how they cut children's hair – some have special 'cars' or other novelty seats to sit in, others prefer to have the child sat on their parent's lap, on a booster seat or stood in front of the mirror.
- If your child is nervous of loud noises, consider asking the hairdresser not to blow-dry your child's hair or use clippers.



- Talk to your child about how to behave at a hairdresser's salon – explain that they shouldn't touch scissors or razors and that they will need to sit as still as possible when their hair is being cut or styled.
- Explain that scissors need to be used carefully and that their hair should only ever be cut by an adult.

## HOW YOUR CHILD IS BENEFITING

### Understanding the world

Experiences like a trip to the hairdresser enable young children to make sense of their physical world and community by building up their knowledge and enabling them to make connections.

While at the salon you can chat about what is happening and speak about people's job roles – such as the receptionist making appointments, the hairdresser styling people's hair or a beautician painting nails.

### Learning new words

Introduce vocabulary specific to the hairdresser visit, such as 'blow-dry', 'stylist', 'fringe', 'parting', 'cornrows' and 'appointment'.

### Numeracy

Discuss the time of your appointment and look at a clock to see how long you have to wait. Explain how you need to pay to have your hair cut and show your child the money you'll be using or look at a price list.

Introduce concepts of measurement by talking about long and short hair, or how much to trim from their hair.



## Social interactions

Encourage your child to say hello when they enter the hair salon and perhaps tell the hairdresser what they want done – this can enable them to take control of the situation as well as build confidence in interacting with unfamiliar people. If you are paying with cash, your child could hand over the money afterwards.

## AFTER THE EVENT

### Let's pretend

Engaging in role play with your child provides a meaningful way for them to explore, rehearse and use language in situations that they will not normally be in. You could set up a simple hairdresser's salon with a chair, mirror, brush and comb, hair accessories and cloak or towel. By inhabiting the role of a hairdresser, your child is also thinking about and modelling an adult's behaviour.

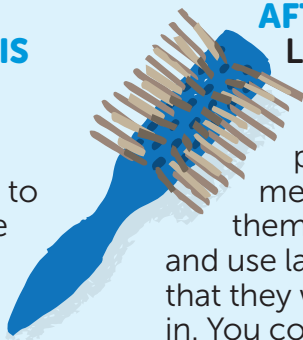
Have fun together and ask questions that encourage your child to use imaginative and descriptive language – for example, 'What sort of hairstyle would you like to create for me?'

Chat about different colours and styles of hair – you could contrast a relative's curly hair with a friend's straight hair, or think about hair lengths and colours. Do they know someone with brightly coloured hair or a bald head?

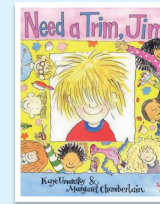
### What's your job?

As your child has new experiences and tries to make sense of the world around them, they may begin to show an interest in other jobs that adults do.

Encourage them to talk to relatives and family friends about their work. ■



## story time



### Need a Trim, Jim by Kaye Umansky and Margaret Chamberlain

No-one can remember what Jim's face is like because it's hidden behind an enormous fringe, but he's reluctant to have his hair cut.



### Hugh Shampoo by Karen George

Children who dislike having their hair done, will identify with Hugh.



### The Girl with the Bird's Nest Hair by Sarah Dyer

A cautionary, anarchic tale for children reluctant to brush their hair.



### I Don't Want Curly Hair by Laura Ellen Anderson

A story reminding us that variety is a good thing.



### A Song for Jamela by Niki Daly

Jamela is excited when asked to help out at Aunt Beauty's hairdressing salon and Afro-Idols contestant Miss Bambi Chaka Chaka walks in. But then Miss Chaka Chaka's hairdo is ruined. Can Jamela save the day?

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