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## Buttons, Buckles and Bows, Or The Art of Tying a Shoe Lace

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The shoes were red with silver slashes on the side. They were very cool and my son had spotted them the moment we walked into the store.

He needed new shoes and I was just about to ask if they had a pair in his size, when I saw that they had laces.

Oops -- my son doesn't know how to lace a shoe.

Panic: My son is six and can read chapter books, but he cannot lace shoes. Double panic: My mother is quite certain that I knew how to tie shoe laces before the age of six.

It's not that I haven't thought about important things like my kids being able to tie shoe laces. But I have to admit that I've always passed by lace-ups in the shoe store and headed straight for Velcro instead, because Velcro shoes are just so much easier for all of us, kids and parents, to handle in our busy day-to-day lives.

Things have to change at some point, though, and that point is now. I don't really remember how or where I learned to tie a shoe lace, but I am on a mission to make my son learn how to lace a pair of shoes. I also want him to know how to pull up a zipper to the end, shut the top button on a pair of jeans, and do a belt buckle properly. Too long has he worn pants with elasticized waists.

I have told readers in a previous column about my battle with the Gameboy and how I'm trying to ensure it doesn't entirely consume my son. My new brilliant idea is a "practical skills" time, where I bring out shoes, belts and anything with a button, a lace or a zipper on it, so my son can practice.

Initially, my son bothered me every few seconds to help him out. But I have pointed him in the right direction and he is raring to go, eager to master the arts of lacing, buttoning and buckling. He's quite absorbed by it all and forgets all else while concentrating on getting it going.

It's true that the convenient kids' clothing we get these days fits perfectly into the on-the-go lifestyles we busy working (or non-working) parents lead, even as it has made people like me lazier. Kids can handle Velcro and pants with elastic waistbands on their own from an early age, and it's quite easy to forget about the rest and always buy that kind of apparel and footwear. I mean, you could probably get through your entire adult life wearing Velcro shoes.

Perhaps I'm the only one who's six year-old can't tie laces, and perhaps everyone eventually learns to lace, buckle and button properly. But I'm not taking any chances, and I'm banking on these things being learned at an age where they're still kind of fun and exciting like a new game, and not trite and boring. – *Savita Iyer*