

Sharing

Teaching your child that everything is not “mine”

Sharing is hard for a lot of young children.

Most very young children consider everything “mine.” They don’t understand what it means to share something. They think you are taking it away. They don’t know they will get it back.

If your child has just learned the meaning of the words “mine,” “yours,” and “ours,” then he or she may be too young to understand how to share. Around the age of 2 years is the time to begin teaching your child about sharing.

Even older children who may understand that everything does not belong to them may have difficulty sharing. But by the age of 5 or 6, most children will share toys and take turns regularly.

When young children have a hard time sharing, it does not mean they are spoiled or selfish. Given time, and a little help from their parents, they will learn.

On Back

How to help your child learn to share.

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You & Your Child



Teaching your child that everything is not “mine”

Prepare your child to learn about sharing

A little preparation can go a long way toward helping your child learn to share. Some good first steps are:

- Tell your child that some things belong to other people. For example, “This is Daddy’s book, don’t touch.”
- Show your child objects that are shared by everyone at home – the TV, for example, or chairs.
- Teach your child the basic idea of taking turns.
- When other people are sharing, point it out to your child so he or she can get an idea of what you will be trying to teach.
- Use the words “share” and “sharing” when you, your child, and others share so your child will learn what the words mean.

Create times when it helps to share or take turns

You can create all kinds of sharing experiences that can be fun. Playing catch with a ball is a good one. Another is to have your child do an art project with some friends that involves them sharing glue, crayons, and other supplies.

At snack time, allow your child to pass out the treat to a group of friends. Ask your child to suggest the best way to make sure everyone gets the same amount. Then tell your child, “We’re sharing.”

Suggest ways your child can share

If a situation arises that involves your child having to share, give your child advance notice and offer some suggestions. For example, “Billy, we are going to the park. If you want to use the slide, you have to wait for your turn and share it.”

Plan for guests

Sharing is usually harder for children to do at home than it is when they are at someone else’s house.

Before guests arrive, talk about sharing. Put toys away that your child finds too hard to share – but not too many. It is usually easier for children to share when there are many things to play with.

Practice sharing with your child

Have your child share something with you, or practice doing something that requires you and your child to take turns.

Set realistic goals

Your child will likely feel the most possessive about a favorite toy or a new toy. Don’t expect your child to share it right away. You will need to teach and reteach each year until sharing is learned.

Sharing deserves your praise

Sharing is a big step for a young child. So, when your child shares a toy, or takes turns as a way to solve a problem with a friend, give some well-deserved praise. For example, “I’m so proud of you for sharing your race car with Billy.”

Small rewards may help, too

Don’t ignore it when young children play and cooperate. Catch them sharing, and tell them how great it is that they share nicely.

Have a penalty for not sharing

Try to make sharing more pleasant than not sharing.

For example, if your child won’t let a friend have a turn on the slide, step in and allow the friend to have two turns in a row. When it’s your child’s turn again, let him or her slide, but remind the children the rules are that they must share the slide.

