

Sharing



WHY IS LEARNING TO SHARE SO HARD?

Children under 3 years old naturally want to have everything their way. They're focused on their *own* feelings and thoughts. "I want what I want, and I want it now!" This behavior can be embarrassing but is typical. Young children haven't developed the ability to put themselves in another's shoes yet. This doesn't mean they're bad, or that you didn't teach them well.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are many ways to help young children learn to share. Here are a few suggestions to try. Some approaches may work better than others. Keep trying new things.

- **Ensure safety.** When a young child feels threatened (like when a friend or sibling tries to take a toy), they may respond in an aggressive way. When this happens, move in close and stop the hitting or grabbing. Say something simple in a steady voice like, "I can't let you hit," or "No grabbing." Being calm helps children feel safe.
- **"Name it to tame it."** This phrase from Dr. Dan Siegel reminds you to slow down and create space for calm problem-solving. When struggles happen, it's important to recognize how both children feel. "Two children who both want the same train! You took that train because it looked like so much fun to play with." It's usually the child who is waiting for a turn who is having big feelings. You can say, "It's OK to be upset when you have to wait. Waiting is hard!"
- **Offer a "long turn."** Try giving long turns with a toy. "Take as long as you like with those trains, Sam. Jade will wait for you to be done. Jade, would you like to read a book or play with another toy until Sam is done?" To a child it can feel like as soon as they start playing, a play-mate demands to "take a turn." Sometimes, when a child has a long turn to play, they realize it's more fun to play together. (You can also allow a child to put away a favorite toy that's too hard to share.)
- **Use a timer or clock.** In some cases, letting a child decide when their turn will be over just isn't practical. At those times, a timer or clock can help. The great thing about the timer is that it's not the parent saying the time is up, it's the "bell." You can also ask the children how long the turns should be. This gives them a chance to help make the rules.

SCAN FOR MORE INFO



Learning to share takes a long time. Some adults are still working on it! It's easy to dread moments of struggle between children. Instead, think of them as chances to learn skills. Don't underestimate children's ability to come up with great ideas! Ask their opinion. They may come up with a surprising way to work it out.