

Tips on sharing

It's mine!

John is playing with a pile of blocks. Megan walks over and grabs as many blocks as she can hold. John yells, "No, they're mine!" and pushes Megan away.

What would you do?

Sharing is learned

Sharing is a skill that children learn over time. Very young children think everything is theirs. This is a normal stage in a child's development. Everything is fine when a young child plays by herself. Place her with a group of children and the problems begin. In a group, the toys aren't "mine," they are there for everyone!

You can begin the steps of teaching sharing to two-year-olds. However, don't expect them to really begin sharing on their own until they are three-and-a-half to four years old.



Special things

Do you have something special that you don't like to share with anyone else? Children do too. They shouldn't be expected to share a special blanket or stuffed animal. Children need a place for their own special belongings, where other children know to leave the belongings alone.

Talk with the children and parents about bringing toys from home. Explain that other children will want to see and play with these toys. Some child care providers set a certain time each day for children to play with toys from home. When the time is up, the special toys are put away. Other providers or child care facilities may ask that no special toys come from home.

The children of family child care professionals may have special belongings they do not like to share. That's OK. The provider can ask their children what toys they do not mind sharing, and put special belongings away where the rest of the children cannot play.

What can you do?

- If you care for young children, make sure you have more than one of the children's favorite toys. This will allow more than one child to play with the same toy at the same time. Instead of buying many different types of blocks, buy lots of the same blocks. Each child can have her own pile of blocks and they're all the same.
- Teach children to take turns. You could say, "Sherry when you're finished riding the blue bike, Hosea would like to ride it."

There may be times when you need to set limits on a turn. You may want to set a timer so each child may ride the bike for a number of minutes or each child gets to ride so many times around the tree. Ask the children to help you decide on the limits.

- Teach children to use their words instead of just grabbing what they want. Help children to ask if another child is finished playing with a toy before they take it. You could say, "Peter, ask Joe if he is finished playing with the red truck. Tell him you'd like to play with it when he's finished."
- Stay calm when you see a child grabbing a toy from another. It's easy to want to take the toy away from the grabber and give it back to the first child. But think about this from a child's point of view. To the grabbing child, it may seem like you are grabbing the toy away from him.

Using words is a better way. Say to the child, "Selena was playing with this block and you took it from her. You need to give it back to her. Now ask Selena if you may play with some of the blocks when she is finished with them."

- Help children learn to wait until it is their turn. Waiting to play with a toy may seem like forever to a child. You can help by suggesting other things for him to do while he waits. "Peter, I know you're waiting to play with the red truck. Would you like to come over and build a road with blocks while you wait?"
- Show children how to share by what you do. Be sure to tell them when you're sharing. "I have a basket of stickers. I'm going to share them with you." "We'll share this box of crayons so everyone at the table can color at the same time."
- Watch for times when children are sharing and praise them. "Karen, it was nice of you to give some of your crayons to Wes. Sharing makes everyone happy."

Sharing is learned
over time

Teach taking turns