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Sharing Age 3 Summary

Why Sharing?

As a parent or someone in a parenting role, you play an essential role in your child's success. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship, and helping your child grow their collaboration, turn-taking, and healthy friendship skills is a perfect opportunity.



- Each time there is an opportunity, ask your child, "What do you notice? How do you feel? How do you think the other child feels? What are you wondering?"
- If your child is unsure about how to describe all the feelings that occur when learning to share and take turns, consider asking questions, naming what you notice, and leaving plenty of quiet space after your questions so they can share their ideas, too.
    - "How did you feel while keeping the green chalk to yourself?"
    - "I noticed some children did not get to use the colors they wanted to use."
    - "I noticed other children offered to share their chalk."
    - "Was there anything that made you feel worried?"
    - "How do you feel right now?"
    - "How will you feel next time we share the chalk?"
    - "Is there anything we can do to remember how good it felt to share with your friends?"
- When reading books, look at the images of people and ask your child what they notice when the characters share. Ask, "How do you think that character is feeling? Has sharing ever made you feel that way?"

Tip: Your child will give you lots of cues about whether a request to share feels challenging for them at that moment. Every child is different, and your child may change from day to day in terms of how willing they are to take on challenges and be resilient when those experiences become difficult.



Teach New Skills

- Help your child to offer an extra book, snack, or doll to a friend. “Let’s go over and see if your friend would like a snack too.” Then, over time, you can help them shift to turn-taking using short turns and visible cues that remind them to keep waiting. “Pick one truck that you would like to let your friend play with for a little while, and then you can take turns.”
- When you ask your child to share a toy or something else, they will worry that they will not get it back later or there will not be enough for them to get what they need. Following through on what you say can ease their fears and encourage sharing. “You will get another turn with the ball soon,” or “You will get some blocks too.”
- Read and “pretend play” together.
    - Point out how characters are sharing in the books you read together.
    - Role-play sharing to help your child practice the steps and feelings that go with giving someone else something they have. For example, have a pretend tea party together, and when your child offers you some tea or moves some lemon wedges from their plate onto yours, they are experiencing making something that was “mine” become “yours.” Take turns pouring the tea from the teapot to allow your child to practice waiting.
- Share your thoughts and feelings. Talk about what you notice, how you are feeling, and why you are feeling it. “This is my favorite puzzle, and I was worried that if I let her use it, she might lose some of the pieces.”
- Talk aloud about how you respond to your big feelings: “It made me feel so much better to tell you that I was worried about the puzzle pieces. I will tell her how many pieces there are so she can know how many she should have when she returns it.”
- Grow empathy. In addition to developing these essential skills that lead your child to share, there are beliefs and attitudes that you can promote to help them, too. For example, when your child uses definitive language like, “It’s mine,” you may respond with:
    - “Sometimes, sharing can feel tough, but then it feels good that someone else has enjoyed the toy, too.”
    - “Do you remember the last time when sharing seemed hard? You took a deep breath and were able to do it.”
    - “I wonder if we can do something to make sharing easier.”
- Help your child notice and name their cues to develop self-awareness and learn to trust their feelings. This includes describing and naming the pride they may feel when they have gotten through a challenging situation. Pointing out their resilience will help them notice it and know it is there when the next challenge arises.
- Remember that it is also okay for your child not to want to share something. Teach your kids other ways to solve problems and be considerate to others. That could look like, “Your friend wants your car toy. Let’s see if we can offer her another car to play with while she waits until you are done playing with yours.” Then, model the language you would like your child to use with their friend, such

as “I’m using this car right now, but maybe you would like to play with this other one.” Your child may be too young to repeat your full sentence, but as you repeat this example (several times!), your child will begin to learn the language you would like to see them learn.



- Consider the request to share and make sure that it is reasonable. What is being asked to be shared? Is it something new? Something special? Something that will be used up (e.g., art supplies) and unlikely to be replaced? Sharing is easiest when the item is less valuable to your child and is not consumable. Start sharing with those objects and then work up to sharing more challenging items.
- Think about who your child is being asked to share with. How hard is it for your child to trust the other person to take good care of their toys? If it is someone your child knows and trusts, this should feel like a more effortless sharing experience. If it is someone they do not know, consider that this may be more challenging for your child.
- Provide opportunities for your child to share in ways that are more challenging than what they have done before. The goal is to develop experiences beyond what they are comfortable with. If they have already mastered taking 2-minute turns with a timer, try taking longer or not using a visual cue such as a timer.
- Provide books, dolls, and other home materials that allow your child to practice sharing through role-playing. Can they give their doll a turn to wear their favorite hat? Can they point out sharing that happens in a picture book?
- Initially, practice may require more teaching, but avoid taking over and doing it for your child.
- Use imaginary play to support your child’s problem-solving skills. This could look like playing out a typical sharing scenario and then pausing play to ask your child, “Piggy wants Bunny’s toy, but Bunny doesn’t want to share. What could Bunny do or say?” Placing your child as an “expert” in solving Bunny and Piggy’s dilemma is empowering and helps your child practice ideas while in an emotionally regulated state.



- Initially, your child may need active support. Use “Show me…” statements with a positive tone and body language to express excitement and curiosity, and ask them to demonstrate how to work hard toward a goal. When a child learns a new skill, they are eager to show it off! “Show me that you can share your toy with your friend.”

- Recognize effort using “I notice...” statements like: “I noticed that you were uncertain about sharing your new tricycle, but you got through it and had a good time. I love seeing that.”
- On days with extra challenges, when you can see your child is reluctant to share, offer confidence in your child’s ability to speak up for how they feel. In a gentle, non-public way, you can whisper in your child’s ear, “If today feels too hard to share your doll, you can say, ‘I do not want to share my doll right now.’”



- Recognize and call out when things are going well. It may seem obvious, but it’s easy not to notice when everything is moving along smoothly. Noticing and naming the behavior provides the necessary reinforcement that you see and value your child's choice.
- Recognize small steps along the way. Don’t wait for significant accomplishments—like the full bedtime routine going smoothly—to recognize effort. Remember that your recognition can work as a tool to promote more positive behaviors. Find small ways your child is making an effort and let them know you see them.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, snuggle and read before bed after getting through your bedtime routine.

Trap: It can be easy to resort to bribes when recognition and occasional rewards are underutilized. If parents or those in a parenting role frequently resort to bribes, it is likely time to revisit the five-step process.

Trap: Think about what behavior a bribe may unintentionally reinforce. For example, offering a sucker if a child stops a tantrum in the grocery store checkout line may teach the child that future tantrums lead to additional treats.

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