

Sharing Age 5 Summary

Why Sharing?

Whether it's your five-year-old breaking down because their friend won't share their Lego set or your ten-year-old obsessing over the presents they want for their birthday, your child's relationship with "stuff" can become a daily challenge. As your child grows, the idea of sharing transitions from physical items to sharing power in the relationship and learning how to give and take. For example, this may look like who leads and who follows in play or how your child resolves disagreements on what to do with friends. Your child's emerging ability to engage with peers and become part of a social community is essential to their development.

STEP

1



Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their Input

- Engage your child in a conversation about sharing and turn-taking. You might ask, *"How can you take turns with your toys?"*
- Practice actively listening to your child's thoughts, feelings, and worries about sharing.
- Engage your child in a conversation about friendship.
 - *"What would you like others to do to contact you?"* (Do they want to be included in games or fun activities?) Then, ask your child, *"How can you adopt those qualities and actions? How can you be the one to include others?"*
 - *What can you do when you and your friend want to do different activities?*
 - When disputes over stuff arise, *"How can you act as a good friend without giving away things that might have significant value and importance to you?"*
- Grab a large sheet of paper or poster board. Ask your child, "Who's your favorite hero, book character, or movie character?" Have them draw the hero on the poster board. Now, list the many characteristics a hero might possess to be a good friend. "Are they kind? Do they help others? Do they accept others for who they are? What stuff is important for them to have, and what stuff is important for them to share?"
- Sometimes, feeling the need for friends, especially when they feel like they don't have many, can make a child feel alone, vulnerable, and different. Yet, "stuff" can get in the way and create arguments. Reassure your child that it's typical to disagree with friends over things but that people will always be more important than possessions.

Trap: Your worries are not always your child's worries. Listen closely to your child's concerns without projecting your thoughts and feelings.

**STEP
2****Teach New Skills**

- Model turn-taking. Children can learn to take turns and simultaneously learn valuable social and emotional skills like impulse control, delaying gratification, genuine altruism (giving something to another because it's a good thing to do), and trust. In turn-taking, your child decides when they are finished with an object and passes it on to another who desires it.
- Turn-taking requires teaching and practicing. So, at a family dinner, call it out when you are taking turns with the butter, ketchup, or salt. Talk aloud about what you are doing, and this will serve as a model for your child. Point to yourself and say, *"It's my turn to use the ketchup."* Point to another and say, *"It's your turn."*
- Proactively teach turn-taking by initiating family games in which your child can participate.
- Children need to learn and practice how to own a plaything, care for it, and collaborate with others, so they need to own it individually. In other words, much can be shared in households with numerous siblings. But, ensure that each child owns one plaything that is theirs alone. More is not better, and sometimes, more playthings - if there are fewer - make it easier to learn skills because of the clutter. Offering moderation in their ownership of playthings allows them to practice valuable skills.
- Organize together. For your child to respect their possessions and the items that make up your household, they must be involved in their care, organization, and keeping. Abilities to contribute and take responsibility for household items differ according to age.
- Teach your child to collaborate using collaborative games. Collaboration requires several social and emotional skills, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and, at times, responsible decision-making. It can promote inclusion and strengthen trusting connections among participants.
- Follow up when your child makes mistakes to help them repair harm. A critical step in teaching your child about friendships is learning how to repair physical or emotional harm when they've caused it. Mistakes are a crucial aspect of social learning. Everyone has moments when they hurt another. But, it's that next step that they take that matters in healing emotional wounds and repairing the friendship. Your child will need support and practice to repair their relationships.
- Grow empathy. In addition to developing these essential skills that lead your child to share, there are beliefs and attitudes you can promote to help them as well. For example, when your child uses definitive language like, "It's mine," you may respond with:
 - *"Sometimes it can feel tough to share, but then it feels good that someone else got to enjoy 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 own 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.

**STEP
3****Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits**

- Use “Show me...” statements with a positive tone and body language to express excitement and curiosity. When a child learns a new ability, they are eager to show it off! Give them that chance. Say, “*Show me how you can take turns with your sister while playing.*” Set a goal for playtime and then reflect on how it went afterward.
- Practice turn-taking! Creating opportunities to practice and reinforce new skills is essential when actively attempting to teach turn-taking. Set a goal for how many different practice sessions you want to schedule for one week and stick to it. Here are various fun and simple games that can easily be played at home and could involve turn-taking.
 - Ball play – Kick or roll the ball back and forth.
 - Hide and seek – Take turns hiding and seeking each round.
 - Bake – Make something yummy and take turns measuring and pouring ingredients.
 - Hopscotch – Take turns hopping down the numbers.
 - Bike obstacle course—Create an easy obstacle course for their bikes in your driveway. Use cones, sticks, or stuffed animals that they must ride around. Maybe they must pick up a stuffed animal on the other side of a series of rocks. This can be easy and fun!
 - Music making – Put on some music and get out one instrument. Allow the children to take turns banging the drum or humming on the kazoo to the music.
 - Board games – Take turns rolling the dice, advancing your piece, or turning over cards to make matches in board games.
- Schedule playdates. Playdates can become an invaluable practice for your child. Playdates build connections and help your child practice the skills you’ve taught them. Follow your child’s lead when figuring out who to invite over and when. What does your child talk about at home? That’s a perfect place to begin.
- Proactively remind. A playdate might offer the perfect opportunity to remind your child just before their friend arrives of one skill or tool they might try out. You may whisper in your child’s ear, “*Remember how we take turns. How can you do that with your friend?*”

Tip: The best way to change misbehavior is to recognize when and how your child makes good choices and acts positively in similar circumstances. Children need to learn what to do and what not to do.

**STEP
4****Support Your Child’s Development and Success**

- Ask key questions like: “*Did you have fun during your playdate? What made it fun?*” Learn more about your child’s impressions of interacting with others and how working together can make playtime more enjoyable.

- Recognize effort. Frequently, children receive feedback on what they are not doing right, but how often do you recognize when they are working on their behaviors? Recognize effort by saying “I notice....” like, *“I noticed how you used an I-message with your sister when you got frustrated that she was not sharing. That’s excellent!”*
- Reflect on outcomes to grow confidence. *“Remember when you and Sam were not getting along? Sam wanted to control the iPad, and you did, too. But, now you both have discovered that playing dress up with costumes and making up stories without screens is more fun, and you’ve remained good friends.”*
- Stay engaged. Working together on ideas for trying out new and different collaborative friendship-building strategies can offer additional support and motivation for your child when challenging issues arise.
- Engage in further practice. Create more opportunities to practice sharing when all is calm and it’s playtime.

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RECOGNIZE

Recognize Efforts

- Recognize and call out when things are going well. It may seem obvious, but it’s easy not to notice when everything moves smoothly. Noticing and naming the behavior provides the necessary reinforcement that you see and value your child’s choice. For example, when children complete their homework on time, a short, specific callout is all that’s needed: *“I noticed you shared your toy! Excellent.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way. Don’t wait for significant accomplishments—like the whole 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.

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.

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