

Knowing how to share is an important skill for getting along with others, but parents shouldn't expect a child to really understand "sharing" until age four.

It's not surprising that it takes time to be able to share. There is a lot to learn. Children have to be able to control their impulse to grab something. They have to be able to see another child's point of view, understand time well enough to feel that it's okay to wait for what they want and be able to talk enough to sort out who gets what, and when.

Be a role model. If you share and take turns with your child, he will experience how nice it is to have someone share with him, and will learn to do the same thing with others.

Babies and toddlers just know that they want something, and they want it now. Toddlers first have to develop a sense of who they are, and then start to learn about ownership of things. Even though toddlers enjoy being near other children, and even want to do the same thing, they still want their own space and toys. It's all part of learning that they're individuals, and that they're important. Toddlers seem to have unique rules of ownership, such as, "I didn't want it until you had it" or "It's mine because I want it."

Try to let your child have enough space to play beside another child, but make room for her own toys and activities. When children are very young, it's a good idea to have duplicate toys to make everybody happy. Allow your child to think of a toy as "mine, mine, mine!" but also praise your child.

When she lets someone else take a turn. **Describe how the other child feels** when she shares, such as, "Johnny is so happy you gave him a turn with the ball."

Be a guide. If your child wants a toy another child has, help him find some other interesting toy or activity in the meantime, to help him learn to wait.

Three-year olds are at the next stage. They spend a fair amount of their playtime working out who will have what, who will do what and who can play. This is normal - it's how they practice the social skills needed for friendships.



At about three years old, **help your child sort it out** with other children if an argument develops over a toy. This will give him the skills to eventually work things out himself.

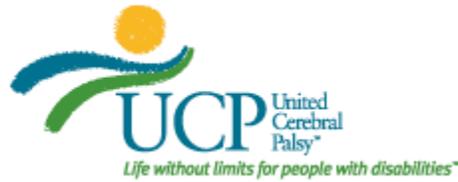
Until you feel your child can handle them, avoid situations with too many children. They can be overwhelming if a child is in the middle of an "all mine" stage.

Be patient. Know that it takes time for children to be ready to share, so don't expect your child to be too generous too soon. And certainly don't punish her for not sharing or taking turns.

By age four, children are better able to exchange both ideas and toys. They like to give and take.



If by age four your child still doesn't cooperate with others, and is hostile, it's best to get some help. You may wish to speak to a counselor about this.



Learning to Share

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