

Ten Turn-Taking Tips

Turn taking is a very important factor in building positive relationships and social skills. It teaches children about fairness and compromise and how to negotiate with others and manage disappointment. It can take a long time for children to understand what turn-taking is and why it is important. Turn-taking does not just mean the sharing of toys, and the skills needed to take turns starts from a very early age. When you talk to a baby and they respond with by babbling, they are showing early communication skills and are learning to take turns in a conversation.

Children may find it extremely frustrating when they are beginning to learn turn taking skills and this is because they do not yet have the understanding as to why sharing with others is so important. They may express these feelings by grabbing items from other children or refusing to let items go. It is important to support your child during this stage of learning by helping them understand which items belong to them and which belong to everyone.

Below are some ideas of way that you can support your child with turn taking and sharing.

Model Positive Behaviour

A key technique that children use to learn is by copying the behaviours they have seen others do. As adults it is important that we model the behaviour we want the children to learn. It is good to highlight turn taking at home by different members of the family, for example you could say, "thank you Dad for sharing the ketchup with me!"



Praise and Reward

It is really important to praise your child when you see them showing you the behaviours you want to see. Instead of saying, "well done" or "good girl", be specific about what your child has done that is a positive thing, "well done, I love that you shared your toy with your brother". By bringing awareness and attention to their good actions, your child is likely to repeat it.



Play Team Games

By encouraging children to work together, they will naturally form relationships with those around them. Young children enjoy messy play, such as water play or sand play, or physical play such as football, and by sharing these experiences with others they will begin to engage in collaborative, child-centred play. These types of activities promote communication skills and social skills with others.



Explain Empathy

Children need to be clearly taught empathy and how their actions can affect how other people might feel. It is essential to talk to your child about why sharing is important and how they would feel if someone did not share with them. Young children need a lot of guidance and support during this stage of development in order to begin to empathise with others.



Create Sharing Scenarios

Using puppets or dolls to promote good sharing is a great way for children to understand and copy what they have seen. You could create a puppet show, in which one character is upset because a friend is not sharing. Ask your child what they think should happen. You can ask your child similar questions when you are reading a story together and one of the characters is not sharing.



Cooking

Cooking is a great way for everyone to share jobs and participate in making one thing. It is a good idea to write down the list of jobs that need doing and then encourage your child to give out the job roles. Explain that each person has a job to do and without everyone's help, the end product will not be right. This activity allows children to work together and take turns in the process.



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Creative Activities

Exploring different media and materials and providing opportunities for your child to make different pieces of artwork will grab their attention. However, by providing a limited amount of resources or tools (e.g. scissors, glue, sellotape) this will encourage your child to share them with others and possibly have to wait for their turn.



Board Games

Board games support children in taking turns and waiting for others. Simple games that require children to wait only a few minutes at a time are helpful in support children's attention and listening skills as well as developing their turn-taking skills. Games such as *Pop Up Pirate*, *Crocodile Dentist* and *Buckaroo* are fun games for young children to play.



Visual Support

Young children may need the reinforcement of a visual representation to understand when it will be their turn. You can use pictures of each person playing and velcro them in order of when it is their turn. Each time a child has finished having a turn they can take their picture off and "post" it in a finished box. Each time, you can count how many people are left until it is their turn.



Find Opportunities in the Day to Promote Turn-Taking

It is a great idea to try and find little snippets of time in the day when you can encourage your child to take turns. This might be singing a song together (you sing a line, they sing a line) or whilst reading a story (you turn a page, they turn a page). Encouraging your child to wait (if only for a few seconds) will support the development of their turn taking skills.



Some Useful Tips

- **Remember:** The skills of sharing develop over time and when a child is at the toddler stage, they are not ready to spend a lot of time sharing their favourite thing. Ensure what you expect of your child is stage and developmentally appropriate
- Use a visual to help your child understand how long it will be until it is their turn. This could be a sand timer, a countdown clock on a mobile phone or an alarm clock.
- Use a simple phrase such as, "my turn, your turn" when you are sharing with your child
- Always praise your child when they have shown you the behaviour you want to see
- Sometimes children need to understand that there are consequences when they do not share. If two children are arguing over the same toy, you could take it away from both for a short period of time to allow for reflection. When you give the toy back, discuss with both how the problem can be resolved.

