

6 Toddler Activities to Teach Young Kids to Share

Does your toddler hoard all his toys? Teach your little one the art of sharing with expert advice and activities for toddlers.

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When it comes to sharing, you lead by example. You make it a point to pass the salt and pepper at dinner, and you cheerfully lend a friend a favorite book. Yet sharing tends not to lead the list of top toddler activities. Why does your little one have such a hard time sharing his toys? And what else should you be doing to encourage sharing? Though it can be frustrating and even embarrassing at times, difficulty with sharing is a common behavior for toddlers that many parents struggle with. Fortunately, you can teach your little one to share using a variety of techniques.

Balance Sharing and Not Sharing

The best way to ease your little one into the idea of sharing his toys is by selecting some to share and some to keep hidden during a playdate. It's okay to put away a favorite teddy bear while a friend is visiting. Hollie Homer, the owner of [Kids Activities Blog](#) and author of the book "101 Kids Activities," says, "Before someone came over, I asked my kids if there was something they didn't want to share. We would just put that toy out of sight." This will put your kid's mind at ease, knowing that their prized possession is safe and sound. Homer says that her kids learned that everything else was fair game for sharing.

Dr. Laura Markham, the author of "Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids" and creator

of [Aha! Parenting](#), agrees. She says that forcing your toddler to share his toys does not allow him to fully engage in play, which is something children really need -- so allowing him to keep some things to himself is a good way to promote sharing of other items.

Toddler Activities to Teach Sharing

Ready to get started? Here are six activities that Homer and Dr. Markham suggest you use to teach your toddler to share:

1. Paint a Picture

Teach your child to share by coloring or painting something together. Grab a large white paper and your painting supplies, and decide on a subject together. Are you painting a house or a flower? Then get to it, sharing the art tools that you're using. Ask him to pass you the paintbrush and to share a color of paint. Be sure to share your tools with him, too!

2. Play the Magic Ball

This toddler-friendly, hot potato-style game is a great way to teach kids how to share. As you sing the words to the song, kids pass the ball from one to the next. In this game, no one wants to hoard the ball for fear of being "it!" Don't have a ball? Play this around the kitchen table using an apple or an orange! Don't know the words? [Songs for Teaching](#) has got you covered.

3. Sing a Sharing Song

Make up a simple sharing song to sing with your child, such as by playfully repeating the phrase "Sharing is caring," or adapting the words to a favorite lullaby or a song from a favorite movie. This gives you quality time with your child while stressing the importance of sharing in an enjoyable way.

4. Share Your Attention

Young kids can often have a hard time sharing attention. To help your toddler get better at sharing your attention, have him and a sibling sit next to you or on your lap at the same time, and interact with each of them separately. Play a game, like pat-a-cake, with your toddler, and

then let him observe while you play tic-tac-toe with your other child. Simply doing this helps your toddler learn to share your attention.

5. Pass the Crackers

Give your toddler a handful of crackers. Ask him to give one to each person in the room. "Give one to Mommy, please! Can you give one to your sister?" This can normalize sharing for him and help him understand that sharing is a regular part of life.

6. Show Him How It's Done

Use subtle activities to demonstrate how to share. Whenever you share something with your toddler, point out that you're sharing. You might say something like, "I'll share my apple with you. Here are some slices for you, and here are some slices for me." When you let a neighbor borrow a tool, mention to your toddler that you are sharing the hedge clippers.

In your regular playtimes, focus on when your toddler shares and provide lots of reinforcement when he shares something with you, especially when first teaching this skill. Don't force your child to share, but praise him when he does. Toddlers love it when you act excited when they do something good -- so when he shares, be very enthusiastic about how great it is.

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