

Learning how to share can be hard for children because it often means putting aside one's own needs and wants in favour of another's. Sharing is not a skill children have when they are born—they need support to learn how to share and to see that their efforts have helped someone else feel happy or solved a problem. To learn this skill, children need adults to provide them with many different opportunities where they can practice how to share with others and see other children in the act of sharing. When a child learns how to share with others, they feel more confident and are better able to play with other children independently. Additionally, learning how to share gives a child a very important and solid foundation for successful friendship skills they can continue to build on as they grow.



Suggestions for Families

Read books about sharing with your child. Talk about how the characters might feel as the story unfolds. All feelings are healthy and normal. A character might be feeling a variety of emotions—from frustrated and sad to happy and joyful. A good example is the CSEFEL Book Nook based upon the book *I Can Share* by Karen Katz. This resource has many activities that go along with the book to teach about sharing. <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/booknook/share.pdf>

Notice and point out when other children are sharing. “I see that those children are sharing the blocks.”

Notice and let your child know that you see the many moments in the day when they are sharing. “Thank you for sharing your crayons with me. I feel happy when you share.” Or “When I came to pick you up from school, I noticed that you were sharing the toys with Sophie. That’s so kind!”

Plan ahead if sharing might be a concern. “Avery is coming over to our house today for a play date. I know how special your blankie is to you. We can put your blankie in a special place that is just for you and just the other toys will be shared with Avery.”

Find opportunities to teach sharing to your child. “Oh, no! For dessert tonight we only have three cookies left for you, Joey, me, and Daddy. I wonder what we can do?”

Suggestions for Educators

In early learning and care settings, children are shown how to share and learn about how sharing makes friends feel. Children learn about sharing through stories, role-playing and puppets. One way educators help children learn how to share with each other is by pointing out how a friend looks and feels when a child does, or does not, share. Educators also encourage children to begin to solve problems independently. “I see you have five cars and Ryan has none. I wonder what we can do?” Or “I wonder which car Ryan can use?” Most importantly, educators affirm children when they solve sharing problems and recognize how proud they must feel after they share.

The Bottom Line

Sharing is a skill that your child will use throughout their life to get along with others during activities and build friendships. Children who learn how to share are better able to understand other’s feelings, negotiate difficult situations with confidence and feel secure in their ability to solve problems by themselves.

