

Creative Habitat NEWSLETTER

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5 WAYS TO PROMOTE SHARING

Parents of preschoolers know that although their children might be developmentally capable of sharing, they sometimes have a hard time doing it. But although sharing is almost second nature to older children and adults (we hope), preschoolers are only beginning to learn that there are more important things than getting what they want, such as making others feel good and fostering friendships. True, young children are possessive about their things and they don't like having them pawed by others, so your days of refereeing toy-tussling matches may not be over yet. But what's great about your young child is his willingness to learn important values in life such as sharing. Here's how to get started fostering this important skill in your preschooler.

1. Show, Don't Tell

Preaching the importance of sharing to your preschooler won't mean anything if he sees you being stingy towards others. So take advantage of every opportunity you have to reiterate the value of sharing in your home. If you're eating a sandwich, invite your preschooler to share half of it with you. Emphasize how great it feels to share with him. Teachable moments like this can pave the way for you to talk with your child about the benefits of sharing with friends. Another great way to teach your preschooler about sharing is to send him to daycare with healthy snacks to divide with classmates.

2. Make Sharing Play

In addition to sharing, kids need to learn how to take turns as these values go hand-in-hand. One way to teach your child about taking turns is to play simple board games with him. Some age-appropriate board game choices include Candy Land, Chutes and Ladders and Hullabaloo. Sharing containers of paint or glue during arts and crafts projects is also a great way to emphasize the concepts of sharing and taking turns to a child.

3. Read All About It

Tania Cowling, preschool teacher and author of the book, *Shake, Tap, and Play a Merry Tune* says, "Books are great tools to teach behavior. Children will often pay more attention to storybook characters teaching moral lessons than they will their teachers or parents because they can identify with the characters." When you pull out a book to read to your preschooler, Cowling suggests reinforcing the idea of sharing by saying, "Let's share this story together." Some great children's book selections about sharing include, *It's Mine!* by Leo Lionni (Dragonfly Books 1985), *Mine! Mine! Mine!* by Shelly Becker (Sterling Publishing, 2006), *Share and Take Turns* by Cheri J. Meiners (Free Spirit Publishing, 2003), and *Sharing: How Kindness Grows* by Fran Shaw (Reader's Digest, 2006).

4. Put Kids in the Driver's Seat

When your preschooler is involved in a tug-of-war over a toy, don't jump in immediately to remedy the situation. Instead, work with your child to help him come up with a solution to resolve the issue. You might say something like, "I noticed that Tommy had the truck first. What do you think you should do?" Once the toy-tugging situation is resolved, set a timer and explain to the children that when the buzzer goes off, it will be time for someone else to have a turn with the toy.

5. The Right to Choose

"Young children shouldn't be pressured into sharing all of their belongings," says retired pre-kindergarten teacher Tricia Young. "Kids of all ages have a right to have things that are off limits to others." So before your preschooler's friends come over to play, give him permission to put away any toys he's not willing to share. This will help your little one understand that he's not obligated to share everything he owns.

Anytime you witness your preschooler making an effort to share, give him a little positive feedback. But if your child is having a hard time sharing don't punish or label him as "selfish" or "self-centered." Name calling and unwarranted punishments can destroy your child's self-esteem and make him more resistant to sharing.

Article: By Charlina Stewart : Education.com