

How to Teach Your Child to Take Turns

Alyson Jiron, Brooke Brogle & Jill Giacomini

Taking turns can be hard, even for adults. It can be frustrating to wait for something that you really want. Think about the last time you waited in line for groceries or gas. How did you feel when you didn't know how long it would be until your turn or when someone who wasn't waiting got a turn before you? Young children often feel especially frustrated in these types of situations. Objects become "mine," and everyone wants to be "first," which can make playtime challenging for children and parents.

Why does this happen? Children are not born knowing how to take turns.

Taking turns is a skill that children must be taught and given many opportunities to practice. If a child is not taught how to take turns, she will continue to play with only her interests in mind and demand turns when she wants them.

A child who knows how to take turns has learned valuable skills about how to make friends, empathize, wait, talk, negotiate and be patient. Teaching your child how to take turns takes time, but can also be a rewarding experience that will benefit your child for a lifetime.



Try This at Home



- **Play games that require turn-taking.** Board or card games are a perfect way to teach older preschool children to wait for a turn. Outside games, such as basketball or catch, are also ideal games to practice taking turns. For young children, use very simple turn-taking games such as rolling a toy back and forth.
- **Build turn-taking into play time.** You can make just about any toy or activity into an opportunity to practice taking turns. Take turns doing activities such as stacking blocks, sliding down the slide, using the swing, racing a car down a track, scooping sand into a bucket, or wearing a crown.
- **Use a timer or a song to measure a turn.** Waiting is hard and children want to know when to expect their turn. Show children how to manage taking turns by using a sand timer or singing a song. These tools can help them to predict when their turn will end or begin and makes it less likely that they will become frustrated and use challenging behavior. You can say something like, "I see you want a turn on the swing too. Let's sing a song and when we are done it will be your turn."

Do you want to sing the Itsy-Bitsy Spider or Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star?"

- **Incorporate turn-taking into your everyday routine.** There are many ways to include turn-taking into the activities you already do on a daily basis such as choosing a TV show, cooking, or picking books to read. Simply pointing out to your child that you are taking turns helps to reinforce the skill. You can say, "You put in the chocolate chips and I put in the walnuts. We are taking turns! This is fun!"
- **Practice waiting.** Help prepare your child for turn-taking by giving him opportunities to practice waiting. For example, play "stop and go" games at the park, with toy cars, or in the pool. The more comfortable your child is with the concept of waiting and self-control, the more successful he will be with taking turns.
- **Celebrate successes.** Encourage your child with positive language when you see him waiting during a difficult situation or taking turns with a friend. You can say something like, "You are waiting for a turn on the swing. Waiting can be hard. You are doing it! High five!" or "I love the way

you and Ben took turns using your special car. I bet you feel really proud!"



Practice at Kindergarten

There are many opportunities to practice taking turns at school. Teachers often intentionally create opportunities for children to practice taking turns as well as learn from watching others take turns.

For example, a teacher may set out only one train to use on the track. Children must then practice taking turns and learn to work together to enjoy the same toy at the same time.



The Bottom Line

Children are not born knowing how to take turns. It is a skill that they must be taught. Taking turns can be hard. In order to learn how to take turns successfully, children need lots practice, help and encouragement from parents. When children learn how to take turns they also learn other valuable skills such as:

- * Being a good friend
- * Self-control
- * Problem-solving
- * Patience
- * Communication
- * Listening
- * Negotiation



-Vincom Dong Khoi (Level 2) 72 Le Thanh Ton street, Dist. 1

-Diamond Plaza (Level 3) 34 Le Duan street, Dist. 1

