

After the Buzz, social thinking ideas for parents and caregivers

From *What's the Buzz?* for Early Learners: A complete social skills foundation course



Lesson 3: Sharing and taking turns

After the Buzz presents ideas for parents, guardians and educators to encourage children to generalise the social thinking generated in the lesson. Children rely on our commitment to consolidate these skills. We urge parents, guardians and teachers to use the session topics and ideas as continuing themes each week. Here are a few practical ideas to teach children how-to share and take turns. Children can develop this essential social skill, but it takes practice, patience, and the consistent guidance of adults.



Be the best role model you can

Be conscious to model 'how-to share' in the company of your children when you're with family and friends. Modelling sharing can start as simply as commenting on why you want to share your book. For example, "I want to share my book with Daddy because I know he'll love reading it."

Whenever possible, set up situations where you ask your child to borrow something that belongs to them for a short while. For example, you might arrange an opportunity to 'have to' borrow their drink bottle before going on a walk with friends because you can't find yours. Children, just like most adults, have a natural inclination to be helpful. Opportunities like this also allow them to watch the way you ask for things.

Periodically, when you have something you know your child would like, offer some to them before they ask. In this instance you might say, "Would you like to share some of my cheese and biscuits?" This is a perfect moment to add, "It's hard to share because they're so yummy, but it feels good once I have shared." This may also lead to a discussion about the difficulties they feel about sharing at certain times.

Be Realistic

If your child is struggling with sharing try to see their behaviour as a window into where they're placed on a developmental continuum. Most children who find sharing difficult early on are just not ready to deal with the feelings that often accompany the act of sharing. They would share if they could, and when you step back and look at the bigger picture you'll likely see them wrestling with all sorts of feelings that make their behaviour look a little younger than their peers anyway. Please, be patient! They are reliant on our prompting, guidance, structuring and teaching for a little longer.

In a few instances children find it difficult to share because they have been victims to abuse, trauma or poverty. Having experienced the lack and loss of precious personal resources their very survival wires their thinking to keep belongings close, to hoard and never risk parting with what has become theirs. Once again, be patient. Children emerging from this position are completely reliant on our understanding, guidance, structuring and clever modelling for much, much longer.

Never force a child to share

When we force kids to share this is more often an expression of our own frustration. Try not to allow frustration to get in the way – it's a poor teacher and often results in setbacks rather than gains. In a similar vein, avoid

pulling a toy away from your child if they've taken it from another without asking. Instead, firmly direct them to give it back. Once they've returned it, encourage them to ask if they may borrow it.

When sharing hasn't worked

When your child has struggled to find the right words and behaviour to borrow something try to remain calm and use this valuable moment to teach the right way to do it. See it as a golden opportunity that permits practice!

Instead, you might say, "I know you love that toy, but you can't take it because it's not yours." Once again explain that the best chance of other people saying, "yes" to sharing their belongings is to ask using a friendly voice. Reinforce that others are more likely to share when they do this. If the situation is right, get them to ask using their composure and friendliest voice.

Teach how-to 'think' about sharing

If your child refuses to share, help them come up with a solution or an alternative. You might say, "I'll play with the blue car for a while, but I'd like a turn with the red fire truck soon. Hey, we can play with them together."

Time it!

When kids agree to share something for a while use a visual timer so they can see it and use it as a way to measure time - a sand timer, a goo timer or play a song to help children understand when their turn again comes around again.

Tune your children into the different sorts of sharing

Basically, when we share with others we either give them something we have and expect it back later on, or we give them a part of something we have and don't expect it back. That's right - sharing can mean different things in different situations. For example, if you have two biscuits, and you share one with a friend, you don't expect to get it back! However, if you share a favourite book with a friend, you do expect it back after they have finished with it.

Some toys naturally encourage sharing

Toys such as puzzles, balls, board games and building blocks encourage children to share while they play together. Use these early on to help kids to share, but remember they will need your input, guidance and supervision.

Keep special toys separate from everyday toys

If your child has a few special toys these will be much, much harder for them to share. We suggest that you put them in a different area when friends come over to play so that they are not at risk to share. Just leave out a selection of toys that your child feels willing to share.

Praise them when they share

When you see your child sharing let them know they made a great choice, and that you're proud of them! You might say, "I loved the way you shared with Zoe, when she lies down for her nap let's cook your favourite cupcakes together!" Praise, used genuinely, wisely and often, is the strongest way to reinforce the value of sharing.

Read stories that promote sharing

There are many children's picture books that capture the spirit of sharing and community cooperation really well. To find them simply Google or Youtube, 'Children's stories about sharing.' A few of our favourites include;

Donaldson, J. (2004) *Sharing a Shell*. Oxford: Macmillan Children's Books..

Lionn, L. (1995) *It's Mine!* New York: Alfred A Knopf.

Munsch, R. (1999) *We Share Everything!* USA: Scholastic Cartwheel books.

Muth, J. (2003) *Stone Soup*. USA: Scholastic Press.

Simmons, A. (2011) *Share!* New York: Andersen Press.

Photocopiable and Online Resources

These resources can also be downloaded from www.whatsthebuzz.net.au