

Sibling Cooperation

Part of the [Sibling Rivalry Series](#)



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Sometimes in the day-to-day conflict of siblings, you may think that sibling rivalry is just the way family life has to be. But it doesn't. Here are some ideas that other parents have had to train children to treat their siblings well.

Sneaky Acts of Kindness

My husband and I bought a couple of fairy wands from a dollar store and tagged each as a "random acts of kindness" wand. Our kids could place them in certain locations after doing small tasks for each other. For example, our girls might place one on a brother's pillow after making his bed, or our 5-year-old might tape one on the dishwasher after doing a sister's chore. Then that child would pass it on with another act of kindness to another family member. This gave them permission to be sneaky — in a good way.

—Sara Hague

"Mom, He's Wrecking Everything!"

My two daughters had been playing nicely when their little brother gleefully barged in and snatched their dolls. The playroom turned into a battleground.

How do we teach sibling cooperation when the older kids need space and the youngest often feels left out, pushing and shoving until he's included?

I've started explaining to my girls that their brother sometimes needs an opportunity to learn how to play nicely. I encourage them to teach him how to stack blocks or scoot the doll car around. The girls cooperate with this plan as long as I take action when their brother's destructive side takes over. If he repeatedly runs off with toys or knocks over their creations, I step in to show my girls that, while I respect their efforts, I don't expect them to deal with unreasonable behavior.

The mutual understanding has helped my girls have a better attitude about playing with their energetic younger brother.

—*Marcia Mishchenko*

The Share Room

After talking with our four children about generosity, my husband and I renamed our playroom the Share Room. When arguments break out, we remind them that this room is where we play together and share. If they are not in the mood to share or just need some space, we offer them a chance to play elsewhere. The children own particular toys, which they can play with alone or together. Giving our children a choice helps them see that, as hard as sharing may be, having a playmate is often better than having all your toys to yourself.

—*Nicole Burke*

Sibling Rivalry

When two or more siblings have trouble getting along at our house, there is

only one place to go — the couch.

"Aw, Mom. Do we have to?"

"Yes, you know the rule. Sit on the couch and hold hands until you can get along."

"Hold hands with her?"

"Yes, hold hands with your sister. And if that doesn't help, you can sit there and hug for 15 minutes."

"Fifteen minutes?"

"Yes, and if you don't love each other at the end of 15 minutes, you can sit there and kiss her cheek." <

"Yikes! Both children looked at each other and quickly grabbed hands.

Needless to say, this method of discipline rarely got past the hand-holding stage.

—*Linda Gilden*

"Stand Up for Your Sibling"

While I typically stay out of my children's squabbles to let them work out their disagreements, I inevitably repeat the same litany:

"Your sister or brother is your very best friend. We are a family. It is your job to defend one another against the world, not tear each other down. If a dispute takes place, it should be in defense of one another. Do you understand?"

They didn't. Or at least I didn't think so.

You can imagine my surprise when at the first parent-teacher conference

their teacher raved about how well my children got along. "It is obvious they love each other very much. They are always standing up for each other on the playground and encouraging one another in class."

My effort to instill in my children a respect for one another was fruitful. Their loving actions spoke louder than words.

—*Jamie Driggers*