

My Turn, Your Turn

Learning to take turns

Taking turns is an important part of playing and working together, but it is not easy. Children need a lot of practice and help from adults to learn to do it well.

The Basics

A baby smiles. An adult smiles back. Then the baby smiles again. This back-and-forth is a first step in learning to take turns.

Turn-taking can be hard when young children really want something. They may want a turn with a crayon that someone else is using. Or they may be using a crayon and not be ready to let someone else have a turn.

Turn-taking involves lots of waiting and managing emotions. These skills can also be difficult. The more your child practices taking turns, the better they get!

Note

Supplies that are underlined can be found in your kit.

Things to Try with Ages 2 to 5

Ball toss

- Play a simple game of tossing or rolling a ball between you and your child. Explain the rules. "First, I will pass the ball to you. Then, you will pass the ball to me." Try passing the ball as slowly as you can. Try going faster.
- Make the rules a little more complicated. Count to three before each pass. Or make a silly face each time you pass. Or pass the ball using only your feet. Say, "rule change!" and explain the new rule. Take turns making up new rules with your child.

Getting Started

Make sure everyone knows the rules. Turn-taking can be even harder if your child does not know what to expect or when their turn might come. Use clear language. "First me. Then you. Then me." If the rules change, make sure your child knows the new rules.



More! 

Things to Try with Ages 2 to 5

Build together

- Invite your child to line up all the blocks with you. Take turns adding one block at a time to the line. Explain the rules. “First, I’ll put down a block, then you put down a block, then me... until we run out of blocks.”
- Build a tall tower with your child. Explain that you will each take turns adding blocks one at a time until the tower falls. Start building! It doesn’t matter if the tower topples—you can build it again and again.



Chalk drawings

- Go outside! Invite your child to choose one color of sidewalk chalk. “Let’s make one drawing together. We can take turns using only the color you chose.” Then pass the chalk back and forth. “I’m adding some flowers. What are you going to add next?” (You can also do this inside with sidewalk chalk on a piece of cardboard.)
- Start with a simple story starter. For example, “One day, the dog put on a hat...” Explain the rules and take turns adding a little bit to the story. Use sidewalk chalk to draw a picture of your story together.



Everyday Interactions

Talk about turn-taking as it happens during your daily routines. For example, when you’re each pouring cereal from the box or waiting in line at the store.

Invite your child to cook or bake with you. Take turns adding ingredients and stirring.

Model, Notice, Practice

“I will wait until you are done. Then it will be my turn.”

Model being patient and waiting your turn. Your child learns from your example.

“I see that you’re having a hard time waiting. It will be your turn again after your sister’s turn.”

Notice when your child is getting upset. Remind them of when it will be their turn. Waiting is hard, but it’s important to learn.

“It’s not your turn to use the train yet. You can color while you wait.”

Sometimes your child just can’t wait any longer. Practice finding other things to do while they wait for their turn.