

**Cherubs Preschool
Information Sheet – Sharing**

How to teach your 2-year-old to share



What to expect at this age

"Mine!" your 2-year-old shouts, grabbing a doll from their friend. No sooner have you smoothed out that squabble than another erupts. "No!" your little one shouts as the other child picks up their favourite ball and rolls it across the floor. As far as you're concerned, you may be feeling that your little one is acting selfish and bossy when you just want them to play nicely with their friends.

As exasperating as these episodes can be, try to be philosophical about them. Your child is acting in perfect keeping with a 2-year-old's view of the world, in which their own things (or anything that strikes their fancy, for that matter) are an extension of themselves. Two-year-olds are beginning to understand possession, and they are developing a strong sense of self, which make "mine" and "no" two of their favourite words.

Of course, some 2-year-olds are happy by nature to give a friend one of their biscuits, but most are more possessive. In fact, many 2-year-olds aren't developmentally ready to share. They can play alongside other children if you keep a close eye on them, but expect some inconsistencies with give-and-take. Sharing is a learned activity, and mastering it takes some time. Nonetheless, you can introduce your child now to the merits of sharing and then build on the groundwork you're laying as they get older.

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What to do

Practice taking turns. You turn one page of your child's bedtime book, and they then turn the next. Or you stack a block on top of their one and then they stack another on top of yours. You could also take turns putting puzzle pieces together or pushing a toy car down a ramp. Try give-and-take games, too: You hug the teddy and then give it to them to hug and return to you. You kiss the teddy and then give it to them to kiss, and so on. The child will begin to learn that taking turns and sharing can be fun and that giving up some things doesn't mean that they never get them back.

Talk it up. Help your child explore the emotions that relate to sharing. If a friend is holding something back, explain to your child how her friend might be feeling. For instance: "Josie loves her teddy, and she really wants to cuddle him right now." Help your child put their own feelings into words too: "I know you want your doll," or "You're sad because Sofia took your car." Give your child plenty of praise when they do loosen their grip on something. At snack time, for instance, remark on how nicely they and her friends are sharing the biscuits and point out how much fun it is to share a treat with a friend.

Praise little steps toward sharing. Two-year-olds sometimes show their possessions — and even let others touch them — without actually letting go of them. Encourage this by telling your child “how nice it is that you are showing your toy”. Eventually, bolstered by your praise, they will feel secure enough to loosen their grip.

Prepare during this phase. If you're expecting little friends over, have your child put their "special" toys away before their friend arrives. In their place, provide playthings that are easy to enjoy together e.g. blocks, tea sets, crayons and colouring books, dress-up clothes, and modelling dough, for instance. Tell your 2-year-old and their friend that they can share these things, and praise them when they do. If one of the children is heading for a toy that the other friend has a tight grip on, distract them with a question, or another toy.

Respect your child's things. If your 2-year-old feels that their clothes, books, and toys are being manhandled, it's unlikely they will give them up even for a moment. Ask permission before you borrow their crayon, and give them the option of saying no. Make sure that siblings, playmates, and babysitters

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respect the child's things too, by asking to use them and by taking good care of them when they do.

Lead by example. The best way for your child to learn generosity is to witness it. So share your ice cream with them. Offer them your scarf to wear, and ask if you can try on their hat. Use the word share to describe what you're doing, and don't forget to teach them that intangibles (like feelings, ideas, and stories) can be shared too. Most important, let them see you give and take, compromise, and share with others.