



# HOW TO ENCOURAGE SHARING

Adults often have expectations for young children that are developmentally impossible for them. Here are some realistic, age appropriate expectations and suggestions regarding sharing and the younger child.

## Remember that:

- If you recognize a child's right to own things, then as he grows older, he will share more easily.
- To share, a child first needs to feel secure enough to let go.
- Children under three years old should not be expected to be able to share.
- Adult help in sharing is sometimes needed.
- It is harder for children to share their own things but easier to share someone else's.

## Suggestions on how to encourage sharing:

- Provide several of the same or similar toys for children to play with. If you have two toddlers, you should have two of many of their favorite toys.
- Have toys available that lend themselves to sharing, when two or more children are playing together. These toys might include building blocks, tea sets, farm animals, etc. Play with the children and talk about their sharing.
- The word "sharing:" is an abstract concept to young children. "Taking turns" is easier for them to understand. "It's Jill's turn now, then it will be Susie's turn."
- If your own child doesn't share toys with children visiting your home, talk with your child before others arrive. "David is coming to play with you and your toys today. Which toys do you want to share with him?" Explain that sharing means letting David play with the toys. "He will not take them home - just play with them here. They will still be your toys."



- Distraction is a good method to divert attention from one toy - "It's David's turn now, tell him you want the truck when he's finished with it. What do you want to do while you're waiting for your turn?"
- If a fight begins over a toy, a good way to handle it is to say something such as, "Jill is not ready to share her telephone yet. Let's find something else for you to play with." In this way, you recognize the right of the child to be independent and own something. When children see that you recognize their individual right to have something, they will be more trusting and eventually will be ready to share.
- Adults and older children who share can set an example for younger children, such as sharing a treat, sharing a chore, sharing the comics, etc.
- Encourage sharing by providing non-threatening opportunities to share. "Here is a plate with lots of cookies. Will you please give one to Jill?"