



Helping Children Share And Take Turns

by Sharon Ellard

Early Childhood Consultant in the Sunday School Field Ministries Department

Why is sharing so hard for young children? Preschoolers are ego-centric. They see the world from one point of view—their own.

Because of that trait, young children often think of sharing or taking turns as a kind of loss. They must give up something they want. Even though sharing is a biblical principle, young children will need your help to understand how sharing brings benefits before they will want to obey the Bible and share.

One goal of Sunday School is to encourage young children to **want** to share, rather than to **force** them to share.

First Lessons In Sharing and Taking Turns

Sunday School teachers can use strategies that make sharing or taking turns more appealing to young children.

Make it easy to share and take turns.

Provide plenty of any resource that you want children to share so every child will be able to keep some and share some. Also plan to take turns in small groups, so children won't have to wait too long for a turn.

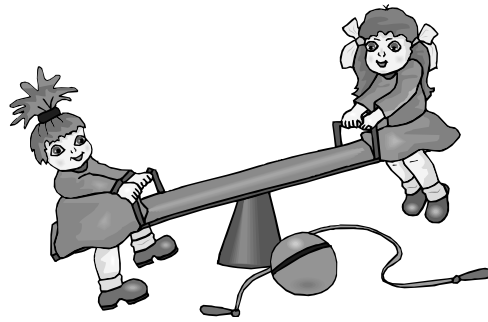
Be an example of sharing and taking turns.

Bring snacks or other treats

to share with the children. Say, "I brought a surprise to share with you. Would you like to know what it is?" Soon children will bring items of their own to share with their friends at church. Use the same approach to model taking turns.

Establish routines that encourage taking turns and sharing.

Generally, children will repeat activities they enjoy. So plan ways to make sharing and taking turns more fun. At the slide, for example, design a game that involves sliding on a lesson-related cue: "Jesus said GO tell



others." The signal encourages children to slide rather than perch and make others wait longer for their own turn.

Talk about the benefits of sharing and taking turns.

Repeat phrases like, "At church we share with our friends." "You were a good friend to wait for Cho to take a turn." "When you share, I know you

are growing up inside." "God sees you sharing the crayons."

Plan times when children don't need to share.

Provide duplicates of favorite toys so more than one child can play at the same time. Use trays or carpet squares to designate individual work areas that don't need to be shared. Tell the children who are waiting that they may use an item next, then help them find another way to learn while they wait.

Praise children who share and take turns.

Young children love praise, and they need it. So applaud when young children share. Thank children for sharing. Draw attention to children who spontaneously find ways to take turns with their friends. Tell parents about their good behavior—in front of the children. By using praise in these ways, you will be encouraging and building up Christlike behavior.

Remember that sharing and taking turns are quite an accomplishment for ego-centric children. A 3-year-old who can cheerfully share (at least sometimes) is mature for his age and is becoming more like Jesus.

Questions For Further Study—

1. Why is sharing so hard for preschoolers?

2. Describe how you might be an example of sharing and taking turns.

3. List two phrases that are examples of encouraging preschoolers to share.
 - 1)

 - 2)

4. Write two phrases you could use to praise young children who share.
 - 1)

 - 2)



This article was taken from a reproducible early childhood mentoring packet called *Help for New Teachers*, by Sharon Ellard, Early Childhood Consultant in the Sunday School Field Ministries Department. Each page of the resource addresses one commonly asked early childhood question. The complete resource is available from the Gospel Publishing House, order number 02-0706. Call 1-800-641-4310.