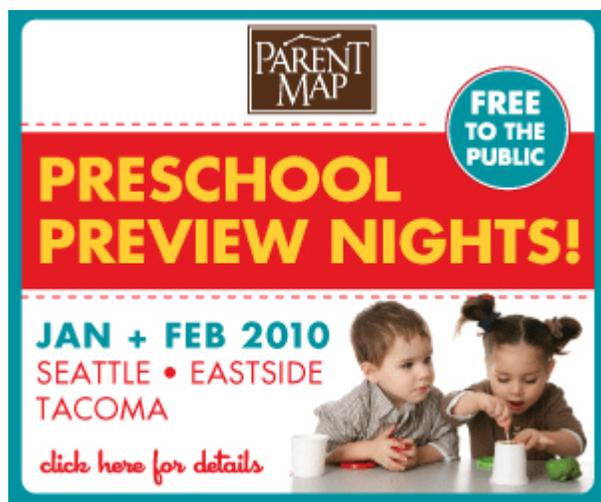




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“Don’t confuse them by adding a different term like ‘give him your toy to play with for awhile’ or a similar variation.”

Heid also warns that you can easily “overtalk” the issue. Use words sparingly to explain and ask for sharing or you’ll lose your audience, she says.

“With even the smallest positive action, give copious praise,” says Gregory. “It’s not easy for the little ones to take turns and sacrifice precious things to others.” Gregory suggests using the word “share” in your praise. “For example, ‘I was so proud of you when you shared your toy trucks with Sean. That’s a very generous thing to do,’” Gregory says.

Although “generous” is a big word for a little one, your child will start to tie the concept of sharing to being generous and he’ll know it’s a good thing to do, says Gregory.

Dividing

Gregory says that sharing doesn’t always have to mean giving up something completely, as you would with a toy.

“You can use good examples of ‘division’ to illustrate sharing. For, example if you have one piece of pie. Explain to your child that he and his sister would both like that piece of pie, but unfortunately there’s only one piece,” says Gregory. “Show him how you can ‘divide’ the pie so that each of them has a piece.”

If your goal is to get your toddler to share with a friend, Heid suggests role playing before the situation happens.

“Saying, ‘I have this, do you want to play with it? I’m going to share it with you,’ reinforces the word share,” says Heid.

Remember to put “sharing” in a perspective your child understands, says Gregory. “If ‘sharing’ during a play date means each child gets the “special” toy for five minutes, then set a timer for five minutes,” Gregory says. “When the timer goes off, the toy goes to the next person or comes back to its owner.”

Consistent consequences

Heid urges you to decide on the consequences before they are ever needed. And be consistent.

“If you’re going to institute a time-out (one to two minutes) for not sharing, then it needs to be consistent. Parents always need to be patient and consistent in their expectations,” Heid says.

As a parent, you know when a struggle is likely to escalate and when children, especially yours, are more apt to use their problem-solving skills and work the problem out, so using that knowledge is in your best interests, says Heid.

A little struggle is inevitable, so don’t fret if you run into some obstacles while teaching sharing. This, too, shall pass.

Heather Larson is a Federal Way-based freelance writer.

RECOMMENDED READING

For parents

The Successful Child: What Parents Can Do to Help Kids Turn Out Well by William Sears, Martha Sears and Elizabeth Pantley

The Big Book of Parenting Solutions: 101 Answers to Your Everyday Challenges and Wildest Worries by Michele Borba

Using Your Values to Raise Your Child to Be an Adult You Admire by Harriet Heath, Ph.D.

365 Wacky, Wonderful Ways to Get Your Children to Do What You Want by Elizabeth Crary

For kids

Share and Take Turns by Cheri J. Meiners

It’s Mine! by Leo Lionni

Sharing Is Fun by Joanna Cole and Maxie Chambliss

I Want It and I Can’t Wait, both by Elizabeth Crary and Marina Megale