

3 Reasons Not to Make Your Kids Share Their Toys

I don't make my kids share their toys.

I arrived at this decision after careful consideration. Unfortunately, that decision isn't an easy one to discuss with other parents, mostly because it appears that my stance endorses selfishness.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Like many other parents, I think it's very important to teach kids to share. I just don't believe toys should be the "ground zero" of sharing that many make them. Here's why:

1. It's Unnecessary

Giving your child a sibling is the best way to teach them about sharing. Your kid learns quickly that the world does not revolve around them and it requires no extra pedagogical effort on your part.

Siblings growing up together have to share all sorts of things – from food to the best spot on the sofa to the right to choose which bedtime story you'll read first. Moreover, siblings have to share the most precious resource of all: their parents' attention. Basically, the lesson about sharing is already covered in their upbringing, so toys don't need to be brought into the equation.

2. It Reduces Friction

If your kids have absolute ownership of their toys, there will be far less fighting in your home. If my daughter takes one of my son's toys and he objects, I tell her to give it back. It's that simple. Dissension is not tolerated.

Most parents will agree that listening to their kids squabble

with each other is one of the most annoying parts of parenting. One of the chapters of Jordan Peterson's book [12 Rules for Life](#) is titled "Don't Let Your Kids Do Anything that Makes You Dislike Them." He describes how allowing a child to engage in annoying behavior will cause parents to start resenting him or her and the parents will gradually become less loving. That's bad for everyone.

Some parents tell me their children have so many toys they don't remember what belongs to who. Don't allow that situation to develop in your house. Parents should regularly prune their kids' toy troves (preferably while they're not home). Keep only toys that they play with regularly. Throw away anything that's broken or has missing parts. Other toys can be put in storage so they can be appreciated in the future. That may sound like too much work, but the alternative is to continually referee your kids' fights about toys.

3. It is Better for Their Social Skills

When we think of kids who won't share, we think of some red-faced little brat yelling, "Mine!" That's not how it has to be. My kids know the other isn't obligated to share, so they are learning to work out compromises. Recently, my daughter wanted to play with my son's Fisher-Price airplane. So she offered to let him hold her stuffed penguin. They were both satisfied with this transaction, and they learned a lot more than if I had coerced them into sharing.

All this is well and good for siblings, but what happens when little Johnny comes over for a play date?

Play dates are a completely different matter and require a bit more parental involvement. When another child is coming over, I sit down with my kids and talk to them about being good hosts. I ask them which toys they'd like to let the other child play with. I also ask if there are things they'd like to hide in the closet, so the guest won't see them. It's usually

easy for me to guess that the current, most beloved toys will head for a stay in the closet. This arrangement enables my daughter to excitedly offer her toys to her guests with little risk of squabbling.

In essence, sharing is great and is something that needs to be taught to young children. But are we going about this lesson in the wrong way? Would we teach them to be more generous, settle squabbles on their own, and establish better social skills if we didn't use toys to teach the sharing lesson?

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[Image Credit: U.S. Air Force photo/Airman Valerie Monroy]