

# Safe kids ☺ Healthy kids ☺ Happy kids

## Preventing Problems Between Toddlers and Older Siblings

Parents want their children to get along with one another. It helps make the home peaceful and pleasant. However, it is not always easy for toddlers and older children to get along. Even the most patient older child gets tired of their pint-sized, tag-along sibling.

Hanging around with older siblings is fun. It satisfies a toddler's natural curiosity and need for attention. Toddlers love playing "make believe" and will often imitate what their older siblings do and say.



Sometimes, parents expect an older child to care for younger siblings. This can cause her to resent her younger sibling.

How can parents foster love, respect and joy between their older and younger children?

- Establish and enforce rules of respect in your home: No hitting or name-calling – ever.
- Encourage your older child to play with your toddler for a few minutes every day. Even a short one-on-one time together will make your toddler feel special.
- Plan play dates for your toddler to play with kids her own age.
- Keep your toddler out of your older child's room and space. Teach him to respect items that do not belong to him.
- Allow the older sibling to spend time with her friends without your toddler present. Keep your toddler busy during these visits.

- Have bins and shelves for each child's toys and belongings.
- Watch your older child for signs of frustration. Prevent the outbursts and fights before they happen.
- Carefully listen to both children if fighting occurs. Avoid saying "You should know better" to the older child. Choose your words with care. Describe what you see. "I see Johnny crying, and you are holding his truck. Tell me what happened."
- Do not just punish the older sibling because he should know better. He may have acted out of frustration. Kids often react without thinking.
- Praise good behavior – for your toddler and older child.
- Spend daily one-on-one time with each child.

Your children watch you – learn from you. If you want your kids to love each other, show them how. Find times to have fun together. Create loving memories.

Sibling rivalry is a common issue for most families. The book Siblings without Rivalry: How to Help Your Children Live Together So You Can Live Too by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, offers good parenting tips.

📖 Visit [www.parenting.org](http://www.parenting.org) for more toddler tips.

*Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital*



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1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week  
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