



# I Don't Want To Share!

There probably isn't a mother alive who hasn't cringed in embarrassment at least once when her child refused to share. This is unnecessary though, as not sharing is a stage in development. As carers we must be aware of ways to help parents encourage children to share. There are many different strategies to try.

## Activities to promote sharing

A great strategy is to use smiley face cards. Have faces with different expressions prepared and when you share by giving a child something, ask them to go and choose a face which shows how they feel. The children will understand how happy sharing can make the person who receives. To demonstrate the happiness you feel by sharing you can then choose the same face and show it to the child. This develops an understanding that even if you give someone something and you have nothing left, you feel happy because they do. Then you can demonstrate how you feel if someone will not share by choosing the sad face. These faces can be used for lots of different activities, as an emotional aid they are definitely worth making.

**First Contact**

and

**Support Hub**

01429 284284

[fcsh@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:fcsh@hartlepool.gov.uk)  
<http://hartlepool.fsd.org.uk>

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## Communicating Sharing

It can be easy to buy two of everything so that children don't need to share. But it is actually better to appreciate children for their differences and to buy toys they like to play with, rather than get duplicates so they won't fight. This then encourages them to share, because they know at some point they will get to play with the toy that they want. If there are two of everything they have no need to communicate their wants, or to share with others. The secret is to try to concentrate on teaching the skill of sharing, rather than being the referee. Teaching them what words to say will be an invaluable skill for the future. The more attention you pay to the not sharing, the longer the behaviour will go on, as by not sharing the child learns that they get attention from you.

## What happens if all this fails?

The problem comes when you are working with a child who adamantly will not share no matter what you try. Don't be disheartened. Many children grow out of this and it can be a phase. Though that doesn't mean the behaviour should be tolerated if the child is upsetting other children. As you would with any form of poor behaviour, explain the boundaries, rules and consequences you have in place. It is not a failure, remember you are teaching life skills and good behaviour to your children. It may sound harsh but bear in mind you may only need to do it once to teach a valuable lesson. Ensure if you remove a toy, you offer another in its place, or point out alternative activities that may be of interest. Children learn to share through other children and through the example set by grown-ups.

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