

Teaching Children to Play Safely with Babies

Tip – Keep your baby safe by teaching your preschooler age-appropriate ways to play with infants.

Keep in mind – Young children don't instinctively know what is safe for a baby. Parents often tell children to play gently with a baby, but they don't tell them how to play gently. Using language she can understand, tell or show your child appropriate ways to touch and play with her younger sibling.



Tools – The following activities for preschoolers with infant siblings are adapted from *Baby and I Can Play and Fun with Toddlers* by Karen Hendrickson, available in many libraries.

- Tell your child, "Very little babies learn by seeing and hearing people and things close to them. You can help the baby learn by showing her toys and other things you think she might like." Talk with your older child about what things are safe for a baby. Teach your child about this now, even though the baby is too young to hold things.

- Babies like to be cuddled and gently stroked. Tell your child to watch the baby's face to make sure he likes the way your child is touching him. One enjoyable way for an older child to touch a very young baby is to have the baby grasp the older child's finger.

- About the time the baby is learning to sit, he is ready for Peek-a-boo and other hiding games. Show your preschooler how to partially hide a toy under a blanket. Let the baby pull the blanket away and find the toy.



- Copy games are fun for babies. Have the older child clap hands, wave, or blow a kiss. The baby will probably copy him.
- When babies begin to crawl, they like chase games. Your older child can crawl after the baby and "chase" her.

You'll find more practical tips you can use right now in *Baby and I Can Play and Fun with Toddlers* by Karen Hendrickson.