

# Preventing Sibling Problems

**Tip** – To avoid sibling battles, teach your child simple interpersonal skills such as taking turns and being appropriately assertive.

**Tools** – Parent educator Kathryn Kvols, author of *Redirecting Children's Behavior*, points out that it makes sense to start addressing sibling issues by looking at how best we can prevent them. She offers several ways for children to prevent conflicts and arguments. These are all fairly simple skills you can teach your children, or techniques you can model yourself.

- **Teach how to take turns and trade.** Many sibling battles are started when both children want the same toy or item at the same time. Show your children how to take turns; a kitchen timer is helpful in this scenario. Another option is to trade for the desired item. If you're having trouble with children arguing over who gets the item first, teach them how to flip a coin. If none of these techniques help, tell them that if they can't solve the problem peacefully, then the item will be off-limits for the rest of the day.



- **Encourage assertiveness.** Often one child is more timid or passive than the other. That child is frequently taken advantage of and becomes very angry. Teach her to stand up for herself by yelling, "Stop it!" in an ever louder voice (this may be difficult for her at first) until the offender backs off. Practice having her use a strong, assertive voice (unassertive children often use whiny, quiet voices). Role play this skill with her until she's adept at it—then encourage her to use it.



- **Model appropriate play.** Children don't like aggressive or whiny playmates. It's hard, however, to teach your child a new skill in the midst of a conflict. Sometimes it's very helpful to use puppets or dolls to teach your child better ways to play. Have your child play with two dolls or stuffed animals. You hold another creature who wants to join the play. Have this creature behave inappropriately. Then make some matter-of-fact suggestions to that creature on how he can play better. Then play that way so your child can practice.

You'll find more practical tips you can use right now in *Redirecting Children's Behavior* by Kathryn J. Kvols.