

Sibling Rivalry



The word “sibling” refers to brothers and sisters, and “sibling rivalry” means the competitive feelings and actions that often occur among children in a family. There are things that you can do to try to reduce sibling rivalry.

- **Treat each child as an individual.** Help them understand that they are treated differently by you and have different privileges and responsibilities because they are different individuals.
- **Respect each child’s space, toys, and time when he wants to be alone, away from his sibling.**
- **Avoid labeling or comparing one child to the other.** This feeds into their competitiveness.
- **When a new child comes into the family, adequately prepare the older sibling for her new important role.** Make her feel like it’s her baby, too.
- **Play detective.** Watch and note when siblings are not getting along [before dinner, in the car, before bed] and plan separate quiet activities for those times.
- **Watch how you treat each child to see if you are contributing to the rivalry.** Make sure you are not playing favorites.
- **Have realistic expectations of how they should get along, cooperate, share and like each other.**
- **Positively reinforce them when they are getting along or when they solve their own conflicts.**
- **Make each child feel special and important.** Try to spend one-on-one time with each child every day.
- **Take time out for yourself to re-energize.** Remember, sibling rivalry is a normal and expected part of family life.