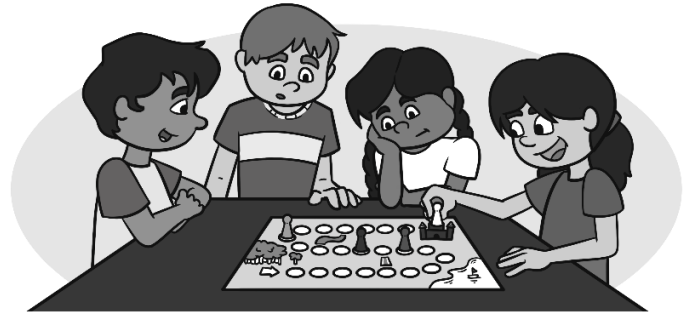


Turn taking is a back and forth exchange between two or more people. This is not a skill that develops naturally. Turn taking begins to develop during play and is an important early skill for the child to learn to later become an effective communicator and build relationships. Here are some ways to help teach and practice turn taking with a child.



Model While Providing Cues

Help teach your child this skill by modeling or demonstrating the behavior. You can model the behavior during conversation or with a game. When modeling, supplement it with consistent language. For example, you might say “my turn” or “Mommy’s turn” while providing a physical prompt, such as placing your hand on your chest. Help your child by placing their hand on their chest and say “your turn” or use the child’s name (for example, “Sam’s turn”). If the child reaches for an object out of turn, gently place your hand over the child’s hand and say, “My turn.” Using the language and physical prompts consistently will help your child learn.

Practice

There are many ways to practice this skill every day! Games are a great way to practice turn taking, while also having fun. As early as two years old, children are able to understand and practice turn taking. Some great activities are rolling a ball back and forth and taking turns stacking blocks together. When kids are older, games such as Bingo, Jenga, Uno, and Candy Land are great reciprocal games. You can also adjust the environment by placing toys or game pieces out of reach and handing an item to the child when it’s their turn. Use toys and games that are motivating for the child!

Talk About It

For a younger child, use a prop such as a wand or stick to use as a “talking stick.” The talking stick is held by the person talking and is passed to the next person when it is their turn to speak. This helps the child learn to wait to speak until it is their turn. For an older child, talk about it! Discuss turn taking and why it’s important. You may call it a “talking turn” and identify when it’s your “talking turn” and your child’s “talking turn” during conversation.

The Waiting Game

Waiting can be the hardest part when taking turns. Timers, counting, and singing songs can be great ways to fill the time between turns. Letting the child hold a small toy or fidget will help them keep busy as they wait their turn. Give the child positive encouragement by saying comments such as, “Sophia, I like how patient you are being waiting your turn.” Acknowledge that waiting can be difficult, but taking turns is part of being a good friend!