



## Siblings as Playmates: 5 Ways to Help Prevent Squabbles

Siblings ([/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Sibling-Synergy.aspx](#)) are often a child's first playmates. But as any parent knows, that doesn't mean they'll always play together peacefully. Kids have difficulty seeing things from other people's perspectives ([/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/diverse-and-inclusive-books-for-children.aspx](#)), and naturally assume that the world revolves around them. Some children—like those with ADHD ([/English/health-issues/conditions/adhd/Pages/Understanding-ADHD.aspx](#)) or autism ([/English/health-issues/conditions/Autism/Pages/Autism-Spectrum-Disorder.aspx](#))—need help thinking about each other's minds, or how to coordinate their behaviors with someone else's.

Here are some ideas for trying to set up kids for thinking collaboratively when they play ([/English/family-life/power-of-play/Pages/the-power-of-play-how-fun-and-games-help-children-thrive.aspx](#)).

### Prompt them to be partners



As they run outside or start to wrestle in the hallway, give them a hint of how they could play as a team. Think of characters they love. For example: "Hey, you be Harry and you be Hermione! Pretend you're heading into the Forbidden Forest." Or suggest one sibling be the teacher, one the student. One child could be the shopper, the other the check-out person. Make sure they switch roles after a while.

### Find a board game that involves working together

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Look for games that encourage collaboration to solve the problem. Building activities, strategy games and word searches or hidden picture games are great to do together.

## Create a silly turn-taking drawing



Have one child draw something ("one day, an alligator woke up..."), and the other embellish it with something silly ("...and he put on roller skates...") and so on. Tell a story piece by piece, and see where it goes, and how ridiculous you can make it.

## Use a turn-taking timer

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If kids are fighting over a toy, try having them set a timer for taking turns. Let them decide whether it will be 5 minutes, 10, or more. Put them in charge of handing the toy over to their sibling when done—and praise them when they do!

## Have a kids versus grown-ups game



It could be a board game, soccer, catch or a scavenger hunt. And maybe consider letting the kids win sometimes.

If your kids do wind up arguing, talk to them about how they want to be broken up when things get heated (</English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Disciplining-Your-Child.aspx>). Where will their corners in your home be, to get a rest from each other? Or do they want parents to stay out of it, and promise that they will do their best to solve the problem together?

## More information

Sibling Synergy: Build Healthy Relationships at Home (</English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Sibling-Synergy.aspx>)

Power of Play: An Alliance With Melissa & Doug (</English/family-life/power-of-play/Pages/power-of-play-an-alliance-with-melissa-and-doug.aspx>)

- [Monthly Play Printables \(https://www.melissaanddoug.com/blogpost/?postId=free-may-printables\)](https://www.melissaanddoug.com/blogpost/?postId=free-may-printables)—  
Free activity sheets you can print for your child

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