



# Wee Learn

Wee Builders  
(3 – 4 years):  
When an Older Sibling  
Starts School



When a child starts school the entire family begins this new journey! The change in routine and daily structure does not just impact the child starting school, it affects the entire family, especially the young sibling left behind, because they usually spend most of the day together at home, or if they're in daycare they'll tend to gravitate towards each other. So when one goes to 'big school' and leaves the other behind, it can cause deep upset in the household. Siblings take up a large portion of each other's worlds, so losing that companion can be difficult. As with any big change there is an adjustment period, and sometimes that time can go on for quite a while.

When this time comes around, parents don't just need to sit back and hope for the best, there are a couple of things you could try to help smooth the transition:

1. Try to set up individual play dates so the siblings get used to having time with other kids their age
2. Start doing one-on-one activities with each child (if feasible)
3. Try to help the children understand what they're feeling, understanding what's going on inside can sometimes ease the upset
4. Now that the school year has started, make it a game with your younger child to try and flip an icky feeling back to a nice one. This serves to do two things; it distracts them from being upset at their sibling not being around, and gets them re-focused on more pleasant things
5. Re-framing is key: instead of them thinking "I will miss my big brother/sister all day", support your child to turn their thinking around to "it won't be long until they're home again"
6. Have your younger children draw pictures during the day and share them with the older sibling when they get home from school
7. Make drop-off times a fun activity: sing songs together, or tell funny stories or jokes
8. Read books about the experience together.

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