

TurnTaking

by Linda Mawhinney &
Mary Scott McTeague



Turn-taking is essential in conversation as speech and language develops. In infants and toddlers, this skill begins in play and during joint attention and interaction. Taking turns is one of the early goals that your child will need to practice to become an effective communicator. Below are play activities to encourage and develop this skill.

- Use a toy car and a slide. Make a slide by propping a piece of cardboard against a chair or use your child's slide. Cue your child by saying, "Ready, set, go," then drop the car down the slide. Get the car when it reaches the bottom. Tell your child, "Your turn." Give him/her the car to let it go. Catch it as it reaches the bottom and say, "My turn." Continue taking turns until your child begins to lose interest.
- Take turns with a pop-up toy. Hold the toy near you. Say, "My turn" and push a button. Push the toy to your child and tell him/her, "Your turn." Reinforce your child by clapping.
- Use building blocks for this activity. Hold the blocks in your lap. Stack two blocks. Give your child one block and say, "Your turn." Help him/her stack a block if needed. Continue in this fashion for a set of 10 turns. Let your child knock the tower down.
- Use a shape sorter toy, three-shape cans, or boxes. Hold the shapes in your lap. Say, "My turn" and put a shape in. Give one to your child and say, "Your turn." Continue until all the shapes are put in the container. Dump the shapes out and continue for as long as your child maintains interest.
- Taking turns can be emphasized with any tickle or play game. Just use the cues "My turn," "Your turn."

Helpful Hints

- Keep the objects for the activity out of your child's reach. This allows you to control turn-taking and develop the skill.
- Provide your child tactile, visual, and verbal cues. Pat your chest when it is your turn. Take your child's hand and use it to pat his/her chest for his/her turn.

