



New Baby and Pre-School Age Siblings

You have a new baby on the way and you're concerned about how your older child will react to this new addition to the family. You know there's the potential for "sibling rivalry" – a competition between brothers and sisters for the love and attention of their parents, for material things, and for power.

The thought of having a new brother or sister may be exciting at first, but once that new baby is in the house, it's only a matter of time before the older child's sense of attachment, ownership and entitlement in the family is threatened by the presence of this new "interloper".

Be prepared. Expect the inevitable. Make a plan for sibling rivalry!

Talk to the bulge! Introduce your older child to your baby before it's born.

- Encourage your child to start talking to the baby in your growing belly.
- Allow him to pat your belly, feel the baby move and just hang out with the belly.
- Show them your ultrasound pictures.
- Tell your older child how wonderful it is to have another little one to love as much as you love him.

Relive your older child's babyhood.

- Go over old photographs of when your older child was an infant.
- Talk about when you took her home from the hospital, about changing her diapers, feeding and bathing her and cuddling her to make her feel secure.
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Hopefully, the older child will not be too surprised with the amount of attention you give the new baby because mom and dad did the same thing when she was born.

Keep in mind that children under the age of three don't understand the concept of sharing, so there's no point in trying to make them understand. But you can make an effort to make the older child feel as involved and secure as possible.

- You can read a book or cuddle with the older child while you're feeding the baby.
- Keeping your baby in a sling gives your hands freedom to nurture your infant while playing with your older child.
- And when/if both parents are home, the older child can get equal attention from your parenting partner while you are tending to your baby's needs.

Include your older child whenever possible in the care of your baby.

- They can be your special helper by fetching a diaper and a clean t-shirt when needed.
- When friends and family come over with gifts for the new baby, the older child can



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be responsible for opening gifts and testing the softness of the blankets or testing the baby toys. Sometimes, friends and family will also bring something extra for the older child when they come by with gifts for the new baby. If this doesn't happen, you can prepare by having a stash of small items you can give to your older child so he doesn't feel left out or jealous.

On occasion, leave the baby at home with your parenting partner or a sitter, and take your older child out for a special day with mom or dad -- maybe a trip to the park or a long walk with the dog. And don't forget grandparents or other caregivers. A special day with them can feel just as exciting and special as one with mom or dad!

It's normal for young children to feel jealous of a new baby. Just understand that it is what it is and that your job as a parent is to guide and support your older child through what is just the first phase of many sibling rivalry phases.

For more tips call the Parent Trust Family Help Line: 800.932.4673

[I'd like a printable version of "Sibling Rivalry"!](#)

For more tips, or if you need more information or would like to talk to someone:

In Washington State: Call the Family Help Line at 1-800-932-HOPE

Outside of Washington State: contact your local Circle of Parents agency at www.circleofparents.org