



Preparing Siblings for Baby's Arrival

If you have more than one child, some form of sibling rivalry is probably inevitable. There's no perfect number of years to have between each child to guarantee that they'll get along. With preplanning and patience, you can keep the negatives to a minimum.

Before the Birth

- You can tell your older children about the new baby when you begin telling other family members and friends.
- Include your older children in the business of getting ready for the new baby as much as possible.
- If possible, major changes in your older children's lives should be done before the new baby comes home: changing rooms or beds, toilet training, starting preschool, etc.
- If you're giving an older sibling's crib to the new baby, make sure you move your toddler into his new bed long before the new baby comes home. You might even want to paint it and put it away for a while so he doesn't make the connection.
- Many healthcare facilities offer "sibling classes" for older children. They talk about safety, helping out and the advantages of being the older child.
- Decide in advance what you'll do with your older children when you're feeding the baby.
- If you have friends or relatives with babies, let your children spend time around them to get an idea of what life will be like after your baby arrives.

When Baby Comes Home

- Allow your older children to take care of the newborn. With adult supervision, they can help change diapers, feed the baby and choose outfits for the baby to wear.
- Keep the discipline the same and try not to overreact or underreact. Once the baby comes home, your older children may test the boundaries you've already set. They'll feel more secure knowing that things will be the same.
- Your older children may be jealous when you nurse or show the



new baby affection. Evenly distribute your kisses and hugs between all of your children.

- Keep the normal seating in the car. Your older children should sit where they always did if possible.
- Keep your older children's routines the same, with only minor adjustments if necessary. If you used to read them a story before bed, now you can ask them to hold the book while you hold the baby.

Regression Happens

No matter what age a sibling is when the new baby comes home, the older child will probably regress to a younger behavior in some way. Be prepared for potty accidents, baby talk, thumb sucking, requests for a bottle and sleeping problems. The best way to combat this is to clearly enforce the same boundaries of behavior and have some tolerance. The desire for a bottle won't last long once life settles down again. The thumb sucking will most likely disappear in time as well. It's a good idea to point out all the "big kid" things your older child can do that a baby can't.

Avoid trying to force your older children to love the new baby. They will in time, when they get over their initial feelings of jealousy. They'll realize you love them as much as the new baby. Avoid making them feel that they're bad or they're doing something wrong because they "dislike" their new sibling.