

Sibling Rivalry

The word “*sibling*” refers to brothers and sisters, and “*sibling rivalry*” means the competitive feelings and actions that often occur among children in a family. There are things that you can do to try to reduce sibling rivalry.

- Treat each child as an individual. Help children understand that they are treated differently by you and have different privileges and responsibilities because they are different individuals.
- Respect each child’s space, toys, and time when he wants to be alone, away from his sibling.
- Avoid labeling or comparing one child to the other. This feeds into their competitiveness.
- When a new child comes into the family, adequately prepare the older sibling for her new important role. Make her feel like it’s her baby, too.
- Play detective. Watch and note when siblings are not getting along (before dinner, in the car, before bed) and plan separate quiet activities for those times.
- Watch how you treat each child to see if you are contributing to the rivalry. Make sure you are not playing favorites.
- Have realistic expectations of how they should get along, cooperate, share, and like each other.
- Positively reinforce them when they are getting along or when they solve their own conflicts.
- Make each child feel special and important. Try to spend one-on-one time with each child every day.
- Take time out for yourself to re-energize. Remember, sibling rivalry is a normal and expected part of family life.

By Elizabeth Pantley, author of *Kid Cooperation* and *Perfect Parenting*

