



HOW TO TEACH: “Turn Taking”

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TURN TAKING is a life skill necessary for social success in all environments. **TURN TAKING** is not a skill that develops naturally for many children. Many children need to be taught **TURN TAKING** skills and offered many opportunities to practice. Teaching **TURN TAKING** involves many skills such as: 1) a social understanding of why we share; 2) self-regulation skills; 3) what to do when I am waiting; and, 4) knowing when to take a turn. By preparing a child to learn about **TURN TAKING** you are setting them up for successful play with peers.

*Steps in teaching **TURN TAKING**:*

1. Use a Social Narrative to introduce the social understanding and expectations of **TURN TAKING**.

Example: *“Children play with their friends. I will be playing with my friends today. We will be playing a game together or playing with toys. One of my friend’s may want the toy I am playing with. This is okay and I can give them a turn to play with my toy. While I am waiting for them to give my toy back, I can choose another toy to play with. Sharing my toys and taking turns with my toys will make my friends happy and they will want to play with me again.”*

Example: *“I will be playing a game with my friends today. During this game, we will have to take turns and wait while others are having their turns. Taking a turn means that I can play, then my friends will have a chance to play. While I am waiting for my turn, I can draw a picture, look at my favorite character, count to 20 in my head, or watch my friends play out their turn. When it is my turn, I will take my turn and then wait again while the next players take their turns. This will help the game to be fun and everyone will enjoy playing the game when I wait and to take a turn.”*

2. When teaching **TURN TAKING**, use the language that will be used while children are playing. For example, “It’s my turn to go. You wait while I take my turn. Now it’s your turn. This is fun!” You can also use a visual representation of a **TURN TAKING** card. On one side of the card, you can flip it to the “My Turn” side and then when it is the other player’s turn, you flip the card to the “Your Turn” side. We recommend using a green background for the My Turn side (GO) and a red background for the other player’s turn (STOP). You can pair the language of “My Turn/Your Turn” with the flip of the card. Some children may need a countdown for waiting as waiting can be very challenging for some players. If this is needed, try to teach **TURN TAKING** with an activity that has a very short waiting period.
3. Practice with your child using natural, motivating, interesting, meaningful activities. This could be anything at home, the playground, during car rides, while doing chores etc. You can take turns during daily routines, such as Dressing (“You put on one sock, then it is my turn to put on a sock”), or Tooth Brushing (“You brush for a count of 10, then I brush for a count of 10”), or Eating (“You take a bite, then it is my turn to take a bite”).
4. Reinforce the behavior using positive praise when the child is doing the action you are working on. Reinforce all of the attempts and the successes. It’s important to praise the child’s success at the four parts of **TURN TAKING** (1. Social Understanding 2. Self-Regulation 3. What to do when waiting, 4. When to take a turn).