



Hunsbury Park Primary School

**A Parent's Guide
To
Challenging Behaviour
When A New Baby Arrives**

DEALING WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR WHEN A NEW BABY ARRIVES

Read our advice on how to manage this change for your young child

A new baby is a huge adjustment for any child in the family, it is natural for them to feel that the new baby is taking over their role in the family, and this can lead to sibling rivalry.

Key points:

- Understanding how your young child may be feeling
- Taking a positive approach to encourage your child to feel happier
- Encouraging your child to feel involved with the new baby

Understanding what might be behind their behaviour

Many children experience feelings of jealousy towards their new brother or sister, and may convey these feelings through resorting to more 'babyish' behaviour, such as having tantrums or refusing to use the potty even though they have been successfully potty-trained for a while. This is all perfectly natural, and is their way of expressing their feelings of frustration, and confusion about their role in your life and their place in the family.

It is completely normal for older siblings to react in this way to the arrival of a new baby, and should not in any way affect their future relationship, particularly if dealt with in an open and non-judgemental way by their parents, so that their feelings of jealousy will diminish over time. Even if your child appears to be independent and capable of doing many things for themselves and without your constant attention, they still need your love and interest just as much as before – maybe now more than ever. These types of behaviour are particularly prevalent in toddlers, who are still so used to having your undivided attention, and were not long ago being breast or bottle fed by you or falling asleep in your lap.

Taking a positive approach

Try not to punish your older child, as this may lead to them feeling more resentful towards the baby. Although you must explain clearly that they are not allowed to hurt the baby, tell them you know they are not meaning to be naughty and should tell you how they are feeling, rather than taking it out on their brother or sister. Hopefully this should encourage them to open up to you a bit more and feel comforted by the fact that you want to know how to help them feel better. By responding with patience and understanding, your child will start to feel secure again, and know that by making room for a new member of the family, they are not giving up their place or getting any less love from you. This will help them to accept the baby and start to see that they are also a part of their life, in their role as big brother or sister.

If friends and family are buying gifts for the new baby, it may be an idea to get some gifts to give to your child too so they don't feel left out. You might also want to make up a little box full of treats and fun activities, books and toys from the baby to your child.

Tips for managing this change

- If you haven't had your baby yet, prepare your child for the arrival of the new baby. It might help to look at a children's book about the subject together.
- Do look through old baby pictures of your first child with them, so they remember that they too had all the same attention and care that the new baby is receiving.
- Do try to spend some time alone with your older child on a regular basis, so they don't feel they need to compete for your attention.

- Do allow your older child to be an active part of the baby's life, by letting them help with looking after their baby brother or sister like helping to change a nappy, or reading to them.
- Do encourage your children to resolve their differences themselves as they start to get older.
- When dealing with a toddler, try to make them figure out their own solutions rather than giving in to their demands all the time – if they are disturbing you whilst you're trying to feed the baby, ask them to play where the baby can't get in their way – making them feel they can do things the baby can't, which reminds them that there are perks to getting bigger!
- Don't make any major changes to your child's routine when the baby first comes along, such as their sleeping arrangements; try to do this a couple of months before the birth or a few months after the new arrival.
- Don't make comparisons between your children like, "I wish you'd eat up all your food like your baby sister does" This may make your child feel they're not good enough. Say what you want from them, like, "Try and eat a bit more, then you can go and watch TV."
- Don't punish them for regressing or acting 'babyishly' – understand that it's just a natural way for them to deal with emotions they don't understand, such as jealousy.
- Don't think that sibling rivalry means your children won't have a good relationship later on – once they have got over the initial jealousy of having to share their parents, there is no reason why they shouldn't learn to live with their new brother or sister.

Further Resources

It may help to chat to other parents on a [forums](#) to find out how they are dealing with this issue within their family life. You can also talk to family lives online via their [live chat service](#), email them at askus@familylives.org.uk or call helpline on 0808 800 2222

www.healthychildren.org

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