

Playing Together: 16-24 Months

Playing side by side with other children will help your child to:

- Begin to notice and play with others
- Use language in play
- Begin learning how to share materials

Ideas to try with your child:

- Schedule play dates with friends in a familiar setting (at home or a neighborhood park).
- Provide play materials for each child to “dump and fill” together like identical buckets and scoops, dolls, or trucks in a sand box. Sharing and taking turns is just beginning at this age.
- Sit with the children while they are playing. Say, out loud, what you see them doing, as a sportscaster would do. This will build the children’s vocabulary and give you a chance to involve both children in one activity.
- Remember to praise all attempts at sharing and language “Sarah, you shared your bucket. Nice work!” Prompt the other child to respond “Molly, can you say ‘Thank you’, to Sarah?” (Molly responds with an attempt at “Thank you”). “Sarah, you say ‘You’re welcome.’”

If your child is struggling:

- Prompt your child to interact with the other child. “Sarah, please pass the bucket to Molly.”
- Choose an older child who can already share materials as a play partner. The older child can do most of the “sharing” and model for the younger one.

Going further:

- Model working on a project together, such as building a block tower or pretending to shop in a grocery store.
- Lead music or movement games with the group, such as: “The Itsy Bitsy Spider”, “I’m A Little Teapot”, or “Red Light, Green Light.”

The WA State Department of Early Learning and the Richland School District believes that parents, families, and caregivers are young children’s best teachers. This resource guide, part of *Strong Foundations for School: Resource Guides for Parents of Young Children*, highlights a key developmental skill for **children ages 16 to 24 months** that parents can help improve at home.



Adapted from *WA State Early Learning and Development Guidelines, 2012*: “Play side-by-side with another child, at times.” and “Start interacting with peers.” *Building Relationships, 16 to 36 months*, pg. 45