



## Sibling rivalry

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Right from the start, we can both love and loathe our brothers and sisters. In fact, it is often at the very start that the animosity is at its worst.

For a toddler or young child, the disruption that a new baby causes can be awful. Suddenly they are not the centre of attention. Instead, someone else is getting a lot of attention. When they need a snack or drink, they may have to wait while the baby gets what it needs straight away.

It's perhaps not surprising, if you look at how life has changed for them, that older brothers and sisters may not like a new sibling, and may even want to hit him or her. Some children may seem to regress in their development – slipping backwards on toilet training or waking up in the night again.

So how do you prepare for this parenting minefield? Making any changes you'll need to make for the baby – like moving the older child into a bed – well in advance can help to avoid the older child feeling pushed out.

Many babies arrive with a present for their older sibling. Asking visitors to remember to make a fuss of the older child when they visit to see the new baby can also help.

Getting the older child involved with the new baby helps too. They can fetch clean nappies, make the mobile on the cot go round, find the baby's hat when it's time to go for a walk. One two-year-old girl apparently likes to help wiping the bottom of her baby brother!

Involving them in the care helps them to feel important, as well as avoiding the problems of the older child feeling shut out. Many toddlers will feel proud and proprietorial about the baby, telling people they meet: "I've got a baby!"

Breastfeeding can be a particularly difficult time for the older child. Some people recommend using this time to read to the older child, or perhaps even help them with a puzzle. Where the older child is still breastfeeding, some mothers have chosen to feed both at the same time.

But ultimately, whatever you do, the chances are that your children will have bad times together as well as good times. That is just the nature of families.

You cannot force them to get along, but as the parent, you can let them know when they do something that is unacceptable. Your role may be to guide them towards a good relationship with their sibling, but they will have to learn much for themselves. They need to learn how to share things with their sibling – starting with how to share their parents.