

What to Say Instead: Real Phrases for Handling Sharing Struggles the Montessori Way

Sharing isn't always developmentally appropriate—but toddlers can still learn kindness, patience, and respectful turn-taking. Use these Montessori-aligned phrases in real-life situations with your child, other children, and fellow adults. Each phrase below includes an explanation to help you feel confident responding calmly in the moment.



When Your Child Wants a Toy Someone Else Has

- “They’re still using it. We’ll wait until they’re done.”

This teaches that the toy isn't ‘taken away’ forever—it’s just not available *yet*. It helps build patience and trust in the process.

- “It’s hard to wait. I see you. Let’s watch until it’s your turn.”

Acknowledges your child’s feelings without judgment, while modeling waiting as an active, supported process.

- “You can ask, but they might not be ready to give it up yet.”

Gives your child permission to express interest, while still respecting the other child’s right to say no.



When Another Child Takes Your Child’s Toy

- “You were using that. You can say, ‘I’m still using it.’”

Empowers your child with respectful language to advocate for themselves.

- “Let’s go get it back together. You were working on something.”

Reinforces that their work matters, and you’re there to support—not solve—it with them.

- “That surprised you. Let’s let them know you weren’t finished.”

Helps your child process the moment and take gentle action with your help.



When Another Child Takes Your Child’s Toy

- “She’s still using that. You’ll have a turn when she’s finished.”

Sets a clear, respectful boundary without blaming or shaming the other child.

- “Let’s wait together and watch. She’s not done yet.”

Turns waiting into a shared moment of observation, not exclusion.

- “You really want that. It will be available when she’s done.”

Acknowledges desire without making the first child responsible for meeting it.

When Your Child Has a Toy and Another Child Wants It

- “He’s waiting for a turn. Let me know when you’re finished.”

Supports your child’s autonomy while planting the seed of awareness for others.

- “You’re still using it. You can keep going until you’re done.”

Validates your child’s right to finish, modeling how to hold a boundary calmly.

When Another Parent Tells Their Child to Share with Yours

- “It’s okay, we’re practicing waiting our turn.”

Gently shifts the focus back to your child’s learning, without correcting the other parent.

- “He doesn’t have to give it up. We’re working on finishing first.”

Reframes the situation as child-led learning instead of forced fairness.

When Someone Thinks Your Child Should Share

- “We focus on turn-taking. He’ll offer it when he’s ready.”

Affirms your values without confrontation.

- “We’re teaching him to finish before handing things off.”

Provides a simple explanation rooted in respect and development.