



Understanding Siblings

Families may choose one activity under this topic to count as one of the 10 activities needed for the BSA Family Award.

Purpose: To help children understand their brothers and sisters and develop mutual respect for one another.

Note to parents: Sibling rivalries can be a frustration to parents. Fighting between siblings is common; children often seem to compete. Sometimes, children are fighting to be the most loved and noticed. These activities provide opportunities to show that each individual child has an important place in the family.

Suggested Activities

1. If a new baby is anticipated or has arrived in the family, have each sibling choose something to do to welcome the new baby. They could make something to decorate the baby's room, write a note or draw a picture for the baby's scrapbook, help mom or dad shop for baby things, or help organize the baby's things.
2. Help siblings make a list of the fun things they have done together in the last six months. Talk about the good things they do for each other. Make a list of things they would like to do together in the next few months. Choose two and do them.
3. Get a book of cooperative games at the library or a local bookstore. Play a cooperative game with all members of the family each week for a designated period of time.
4. Pair siblings and have the older one teach the younger one a new skill such as tying a shoe, catching a ball, making a sandwich, or writing his name.
5. With the help of a parent, have a younger sibling prepare a surprise for an older sibling. The surprise could be making a special snack, a list of reasons the younger sibling admires the older one, a thank-you note, or a homemade gift.
6. Let each sibling take a turn planning a family activity all the children would enjoy. The activity could be a game, an outing, a craft, or any other idea approved by the parents.
7. Play "Standing Ovation." This game shows players how to applaud and support each other. Sit in a circle. Explain that we all have bad days now and then. Examples: "I left my lunch at home." "My jeans didn't dry in time." "I lost my homework." Invite anyone who had a bad day to stand up and tell what happened. Lead everyone in a vigorous round of morale-boosting applause. Next ask for those who had a good day to stand up and share. Applaud the good news.
8. Have a family photograph taken. Keep the picture in a special album or display it in the home in a visible place.
9. Have children talk about things their siblings do that annoy them. Decide if these are really important or just trivial issues. What can be done about them on both sides?
10. Have members of the family cut out stars and write their names on them (or place small pictures of themselves in the center). Attach stars to a poster board or onto the refrigerator. Make a small sign that says, "My Family!"
11. Show the family a bundle of sticks tied firmly together. (You may use toothpicks, twigs, craft sticks, etc.) Be sure the bundle is large enough that it cannot be broken. Invite each family member to try to break the bundle. Then untie the sticks and give one to each person. Let each break one stick. Point out that the bundle could not be broken but individual sticks can. Help family members understand that, like the bundle, a strongly united family has strength and can help protect the individual members.
12. Have a family prayer together. Have one member pray for specific help for a sibling who is going through a particular challenge.
13. As a family, read aloud a book about siblings. Suggestions:
 - *The Pain and the Great One*, Judy Blume, Simon and Schuster, 1984, also a paperback edition, Yearling Books, 1985. A six-year-old (the Pain) and his eight-year-old sister (the Great One) see each other as troublemakers and also best loved.
 - *The Berenstain Bears' New Baby*, Stan and Jan Berenstain, Random House, 1974, also Econo-Clad Books, 1999. Small bear outgrows the bed his father made him when he was a baby—and none too soon.
 - *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*, Patricia Polacco, Simon and Schuster, 1994, also Aladdin Paperbacks, 1998. After losing running, climbing, throwing, and burping competitions to her obnoxious older brother, a young girl makes a wish on a falling star.