What can you do when a new baby joins the family? One of the most important things you can do is try to see the world through the older child’s eyes. All young children want a parent’s full attention, but when a child has brothers or sisters, that is just not possible. This can come as a real shock to a first-born child when suddenly confronted with a baby sister or brother. It is painful and frightening for the older child to think that a parent’s love and attention are now shared with this newcomer.

Sibling rivalry occurs when children compete for a parent’s attention. It is normal and often unavoidable. Here are some things you can do that might reduce sibling rivalry:

- Avoid surprising a child with a new baby. Early in your pregnancy, tell the child that a new baby is coming. Let the child know about the birth and the way you will care for the baby when it arrives. Invite your child to help you with preparations for the newcomer.

- When the new baby comes home, older children need to know they are still special to parents. Plan time just for parent and child to do things together. Keep some wrapped gifts to give to the older child when the baby receives presents. Plan enjoyable events just for the child with a special relative, friend, or babysitter.

- Let children talk about jealous and angry feelings, and assure them that you understand and you have enough love for everyone.
As the new baby grows, let both children have their own toys and toy storage places. Protect their rights not to share their toys or toy spaces with each other unless they want to do so.

As the new baby grows, don’t allow hitting or name calling. If there is hitting, separate the children. Tell them you love them both, and you won’t allow them to hurt each other.

Adapted from a publication of the Cooperative Extension Service, University of California, Berkeley, California.

Additional Information
Información Adicional

Publications of the Cooperative Extension Service
New Mexico State University,
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Guide F–107 Helping Young Children Cope with Anger/Ayudándole a los Niños Pequeños a Controlar el Enojo

Guide F–108, Guiding Young Children/Guiando a los Niños Pequeños

Guide F–109, Toilet Training/Su Bebé Aprende A Usar El Baño

Guide F–110, Helping Children Go To Bed/Cuando Los Niños no Quieren Irse a La Cama

Guide F–112, Temper Tantrums/Ataques de Mal Genio

Guide F–115, Showing Love to Your Child/Demuestre el Cariño a Su Niño

Guide F–116, Listening is Important/ Escucha a Su Hijo

New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator. NMSU and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.