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**Big-Sibling Blues**

No matter how old (or young) your firstborn is, she'll have some adjusting to do when a brother or a sister comes on the scene. These tactics will make the changes easier for all of you.

By **Renée Bacher**interest<https://www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/positive/big-sibling-blues/> Ghisian & Maria David de Lossy/ Image Source

When I was pregnant with my second child, Isaac, a friend entertained me with a not-so-charming story: While her coworker's [new baby](https://www.parents.com/baby/) -- also the second child -- was [napping](https://www.parents.com/baby/sleep/naps/) in the living room, the mother overheard her 3-year-old whisper to a friend, "When Mommy's in the kitchen, we can spit on him." I was horrified and determined to make sure that kind of jealousy didn't happen in my house. But while there was no spitting (that I know of, anyway), there was certainly envy.

At one point, my 3-year-old, Hannah, suggested with a sweet smile that we build her newborn brother "a really beautiful dog house in the backyard where he can live."

Of course, being jealous is a normal rite of passage for all firstborns. However, the way you handle it can affect whether your child comes to see his new sibling as a friend or a foe down the road. Our age-by-age guide will help your older child adjust to the new kid in town (and keep his spit to himself).

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**Big Kid Age: 4-6 years**

**What you can expect**

Kids at this stage are often more understanding, and they can be pretty levelheaded about the introduction of a new sibling. So if the baby spits up on her, it's easier to explain that he didn't do it on purpose. And if the baby gets into her toys, you can help her put away her favorites so the baby can't reach them. (Toys that are a choking hazard must always be kept out of reach.) Kids in this age group have better coping skills, not to mention the ability to take turns or wait longer for a snack or a story. They also have more of a life of their own, between school, playdates, and activities. Your child's world is widening and she isn't so reliant on you to be her everything. That said, you're still the person to whom she's most attached; if she's not getting the attention she needs from you, she may fear she's being left behind and act up.

**How to handle it**

"One-on-one time with your older child is the best antidote to her fear of abandonment," says Dr. Berman. Even if it's just a trip to the grocery store, invite her to join you and leave the baby home with your partner if possible. And when the baby does things that might drive your older child nuts, be her advocate: Replace her torn book; let her shut out the wailing by listening to a soothing song on your phone. Say, "I know this is hard. Let's take a deep breath together."

**Recommended reading**

* ***Babies Don't Eat Pizza*, by Dianne Danzig.** A charming, straightforward book that covers "wacky" baby hair, hospital bracelets, and the bottom line that eating pizza is a privilege that's only for older kids.
* ***Julius, the Baby of the World*, by Kevin Henkes.** Lilly doesn't try to hide her jealousy as she tells her baby brother, Julius, that if he were a food he'd be a raisin and if he were a number he'd be 0. But Lilly's loyalty awakens when a cousin insults the baby.

**5 Ways to Help Your Child Adjust**

1. Don't try to "fix" your child's negative emotions; just do the best you can to understand and accept them.
2. Feel free to be silly about the situation: "Yes, let's pretend to build a really nice dog house for the baby to live in! Maybe we can send Uncle Noah out there to live in it too!"
3. But don't be so silly (or silly so often) that you minimize her feelings.
4. Acknowledge it whenever he's being sweet with the baby.
5. Know that adjusting to a new baby is an ongoing process. If you're unsure of what to do, talk to a smart mommy friend who has older children, your pediatrician, or a counselor.