

## **TAKING TURNS ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG STUDENTS – NOTE: SOME MAY BE FOR CHILDREN OLDER THAN THE PREK AGE GROUP, BUT MUCH OF THIS ARTICLE PERTAINS TO ALL YOUNG STUDENTS.**

Turn-taking activities for kids: In this post, we will explore how to teach turn-taking skills to kids across multiple settings. We will also share fun and helpful turn-taking activities and games for the classroom and home.

Turn-taking is an important social skill that plays a vital role in the development of communication skills and successful social interactions.

We use turn-taking skills in our everyday life when it comes to playing games, having conversations or even sharing resources and information at work or school.

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## **What is Turn-Taking?**

Turn-taking is an activity or behavior that happens alternately or in succession between two or more individuals.

Turn-taking is an important social skill that plays a vital role in developing communication skills and successful social interactions.

The [American Psychological Association](#) defines turn-taking as follows:

In social interactions, alternating behavior between two or more individuals, such as the exchange of speaking turns between people in conversation or the back-and-forth grooming behavior that occurs among some nonhuman animals. Basic turn-taking skills are essential for effective communication and good interpersonal relations, and their development may be a focus of clinical intervention for children with certain disorders (e.g., autism)

## **Why is Turn-Taking Important?**

Turn-taking is an essential skill for effective social interactions.

Children lacking basic turn-taking skills may struggle with:

- communication and often interrupt speakers
- interpersonal relationships
- building healthy/meaningful friendships

Research shows that, even at a very early age, conversational turns have a positive influence on vocabulary growth.

## Types of Turn-Taking

In this post, we will explore turn-taking from three different perspectives:

- Conversations
- Games
- Sharing resource

### Turn-taking in conversations

Turn-taking in conversations is the process of alternating the roles of speaker and listener.

In a successful conversation, the speaker should:

- not talk for too long (that would look more like a monologue than a conversation)
- not be interrupted
- be able to recognize when others want to speak

The listener on the other hand should:

- be able to read the cues that will allow them to take a turn (silence, tone, body language) and take over without a long pause

### Turn-taking in games

Play has an essential role in children's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social learning.

If we focus on turn-taking skills:

- Many physical activities and games encourage turn-taking
- Games with rules may require turn-taking (as well as cooperation, competing, thinking about the other's point of view and anticipating other people's actions)

A prerequisite skill in many cases is waiting, as well as the ability to understand the concept of relinquishing your turn and requesting your turn.

### Turn-taking and sharing

Sharing resources can be considered a form of turn-taking because it requires a level of reciprocity or team work.

Examples of kids needing to negotiate turns are:

- requesting a turn on the swing in the playground

- riding on the front seat next to a parent
- using a school device

## Who May Struggle with Turn-Taking?

There are a number of reasons why kids may struggle with turn-taking:

- Preschoolers struggle with turn taking because they haven't yet learned the "appropriate" expectations in regards to turn-taking and/or sharing.
- Children who lack social skills and/or language may also struggle with this skill.
- Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder may have difficulties reading social cues or even wanting to engage in turn-taking activities.
- Children with ADHD or impulsive behavior may struggle with [waiting for their turn](#).

## Some Cues that Signal Turn-Taking

Games have clear rules that signal turn-taking.

But conversations tend to flow following more subtle cues.

## Conversational Turn-Taking Cues

These are some examples of conversation turn-taking cues:

- Nonverbal cues such as facial expressions

Examples:

- The speaker pauses and makes eye-contact with the listener, then the listener knows it's their turn to contribute.
- A person's facial expression may indicate boredom or lack of interest. Therefore, it's time to relinquish your turn or end the conversation entirely.
- Voice / Intonation  
We can even help children identify the subtleties of lowering pitch and volume when the speaker has finished speaking
- Questions  
Sometimes the change of turn is signaled by a question posed by the speaker
- I had a great weekend, how about you?

These skills require a level of practice that sometimes happens naturally, but many times can require systematic teaching.

# Turn-Taking in the Classroom

The classroom is a setting with rules of its own.

When it comes to the relationship between teacher and student, the teacher generally dictates the turn-taking.

For example, many teachers require their students to raise their hand rather than call out an answer or ask a question.

The act of raising one's hand is a cue for the teacher that the child has something to say.

In the same way that the teacher asking a question and requiring a response is a cue for the students that it is their turn to talk.

This flow is what allows for learning and progression.

## Strategies to Teach Kids How to Take Turns

Before we move into our fun turn-taking activities we are going to review a few strategies that will help us teach kids to take turns:

### 1. Modeling/Practice

Any new skill should ideally be modeled to the child frequently. If a child sees you sharing resources or participating in a conversation with their older sibling, they will learn what appropriate turn-taking involves.

### 2. Reminders

While learning turn-taking skills, some children may need reminders consistently in order to learn. While some children may learn how to take turns without an structured methodology, other children may need a more structure and accommodations.

● **Verbal reminders** such as, "it is now Becky's turn to use the truck" can serve this purpose.

#### ● **Auditory Cues**

Other parents and teachers opt to use a timer within a structured setting to serve as an auditory cue. For example, "when the timer goes off, it is time to switch essays with your partner", or "when the timer goes off, it'll be Becky's turn with the computer".

#### ● **Visual Reminders**

For teachers working on this skill within a classroom setting, they may opt to display visual reminders around the classroom to remind all students of the expectation to raise one's hand to ask a question or make a comment.

They may also have smaller visuals taped to the students' desk as an individual reminder.

### 3. Social Stories

In some cases, teachers and/or parents create [social stories](#) in which the student can be seen doing the actions of raising their hand and asking questions.

A personalized visual representation, such as a social story can be helpful.

Parents may opt to explain why turn-taking is important and what the benefits are, such as making friends who actually want to talk to you, because “you’re a good listener”

#### **4.Opportunity**

The term opportunity refers to the idea that the parent or teacher allows for “mistakes” to happen and guide them towards appropriate turn taking.

Practice having them say “your turn” and “my turn”.

Practice having them point to others when it’s the other person’s turn and pointing to themselves when it’s their own turn.

Giving them the opportunity to engage in conversations that require eye contact and the reciprocity of conversations is just as important as the reminders.

#### **5.Watching Videos**

In some cases, when children have a hard time taking turns in conversations, we can teach children how to do so by watching videos of people having conversations.

This strategy is used to help students really dissect parts of the conversation and help them identify the different aspects and/or requirements. It’s similar to how language teachers teach grammar by helping them identify nouns, verbs, subjects and predicates in a sentence.

## **25 Turn-Taking Activities and Games**

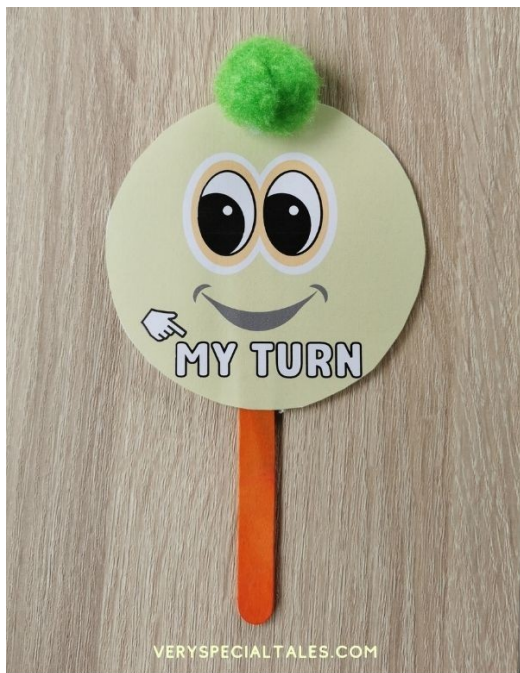
There are a number of activities that parents and teachers can use to teach turn-taking to kids.

Let’s explore some turn-taking activities in the following categories:

- Conversational Turn-Taking Activities (5 activities)
- Turn-Taking Activities / Sharing Resources (4 activities)
- Turn-Taking Games (13 games)
- Turn-Taking in Special Education(3 tools)

## **Conversational Turn Taking Activities & Games**

### **1.Talking Stick**



The talking stick or turn talking stick is literally just a little stick from outside, decorated in a cute way. Only the student holding the stick is able to talk. After they have shared their views on a topic or their feelings they can pass the stick to another student.

## 2. Conversation Ball

If you are up to date with my posts, you know how much I like conversation balls. You can use a conversation ball to start many meaningful conversations (self-esteem, anger control, conversation practice), but it is also an excellent activity to practice taking turns. The kid holding the ball talks about a certain topic and passes the turn to another person by throwing the ball to the next speaker. You can do this activity with any ball you have around or use a conversation ball with purposely built-in topics like [this one](#).

## 3. Conversation Role-Play

Pair students and ask them to represent a short conversation on a certain topic. Built in to the instructions some of the cues that tell the turn has finished and is time to take the turn. Some examples of cues that indicate the turn is about to be taken:

- a silent /pause
- body language (speaker looks at the eyes of the listener after a pause)
- a question (I had a wonderful weekend! How about you)

For more subtle cues you may be the lead character and ask the student what cues signaled their turn. Ask the classroom too.

#### **4. Conversation Videos**

Watch videos with conversations and ask the students to identify the signs of turn-taking.

#### **5. Continue the Story**

Create a story as a team.

Start telling a story and pause after a few sentence. Pass the turn to one of your student (or kids). After a couple of lines, the kid passes the turn to somebody else. Continue until everybody has taken a turn contributing to the story.

## **Fun Turn-Taking Activities**

A simple way to teach turn taking is to identify activities that need cooperation to produce a finished result.

We can turn any fun activity into a turn-taking activity just by making some modifications:

#### **6. Team Drawing**

Organize your students in pairs. Hand in a color by number simple drawing and divide the coloring pens giving half to each student.

Name a color, whoever has that color owns the turn and can start painting. Continue until you have gone through all the colors in the drawing.

#### **7. Mr Potato**

Take turns to create the craziest possible [Potato Head](#). This can be a fast pace turn-taking activity.

#### **8. Magnetic Face Puzzle**

Take turns to create a funny face with a [magnetic face puzzle](#).

Remember to model turn-taking:

- “Now it’s is my turn to find some funny eyes”
- “Oh, it is your turn! What part of the clown’s face will you be adding now?”

#### **9. Build a Tower**

Build a tower as a team. Take turn to place [bricks on the tower](#).

## **Turn-Taking Games**

Most games that require more than one player require turn-taking.

But, if we are trying to teach kids turn-taking skills, ideally we should focus on turn-taking games and activities that have closed-ended turns.

For example, a game like Taboo may be too complex because the time interval can be anywhere from 1 minute to 3 minutes and within that turn, you have many turns and/or opportunities.

Games like Sorry or Trouble are much simpler because the person takes a turn by doing an action and then passes it on/relinquishes their turn.

But for younger children, even those may be a little confusing, and adults have to stay on top of it.

So, the recommendation when we use games to teach turn-taking would be to choose games that are straightforward to play and allow you to focus on teaching the turn taking in the process.

I don't want to dump here a huge list of games, so I will just suggest a few options that fit the following criteria:

- simple rules so that you can focus on turn-taking skills
- fast pace, so that the turns change fast
- not too intellectually demanding (since we are teaching how to take turns, I'm going to assume that we are working with younger kids or kids with developmental issues)

These first few games are great for turn taking, a simple action and move to the next player:

[10. Pop the Pig](#)

[11. Crocodile Dentist](#)

[12. Go Fish](#)

Turn taking board games that have simple rules and are easy to play:

[13. Candy Land](#)

[14. Sorry](#)

[15. Trouble](#)

[16. Chutes & Ladders](#)

If you are looking for games that require a bit more strategizing:

[17. Tic Tac Toe](#)

[18. Connect 4](#)

[19. Uno](#)

And, if we want games that will require some motor skills:

[20. Dart Board](#) (with balls instead of darts for the younger ones)

[21. Twister](#)

[22. Jenga](#)

## Turn-Taking in Special Education

Teaching turn-taking in special education may require work on some other foundational skills:

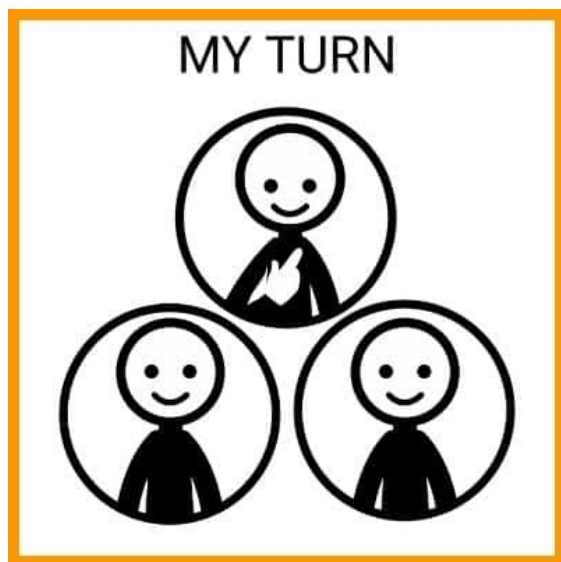
- understanding turn-taking ( the concept of relinquishing your turn and requesting your turn)



- understanding social rules
- developing waiting skills

The turn-taking teaching strategies that we have mentioned in our previous section will be an essential tool

### **23. My Turn / Your Turn**



My Turn/ Your Turn cards are visual support tools that prompt a turn change.

You can model the use of this cards by handing the “turn” card to your student saying “your turn”. Teach your student to do the same when they pass the turn to another student.

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### **24. Say it Loud**

Use any opportunity presented in class or at home to use the words “my turn” and “your turn”

- I think it is my turn to choose a movie
- It is your turn to help Mom set the table
- It is my turn to go to the super market

### **25. Social Stories or Social Narratives**

We have already mention social stories in our turn-taking strategies.

Social stories, social scripts or social narratives are short descriptions that describe a situation or event and indicate what are the expected social behaviors.

This stories assist kids who struggle with reading social cues (body language, voice tone, facial expression) or with understanding commonly accepted social rules.

Any social situation can be transformed into a social narrative.

An example of turn taking social stories could be:

●When I go to the playground during recess, I will play on the swing and then I will let another kids have their turn. My teacher will let me know when my turn is up. She will give me a one minute warning so that I can prepare myself.

### **Conclusion:**

Turn-taking facilitates conversations and allows for appropriate social interactions. Whether turn-taking is the result of a conversation, playing a game or sharing a resource, the end result is the same. It develops satisfactory social experiences.

In this post, we discussed the different forms of turn-taking and certain strategies to use in order to teach it appropriately, such as modeling, social stories and even videos. We also included a list of tried and true games and activities for kids to get them comfortable with taking turns.

## Other Social Skills Resources for Kids

These are some other helpful resources to help kids build social skills:

- [I-Statement Worksheets](#)
- [Self-Introduction for Kids](#) (Worksheets)
- [Social Skills Activities for Kids](#)
- [Conversation Starters for Kids](#)
- [Listening Games and Activities](#)
- [Apology Worksheets and Activities](#)
- [Conflict Resolution Activities for Kids](#)
- [Friendship Activities for Kids](#)

<https://veryspecialtales.com/turn-taking-activities-for-kids/>