

## 5 Activities that Nurture the Sibling Bond

I have three little ones in very different age groups: 10 months, 3 years, and 11 years. At times, their bond is ... well ... strained. They argue, they have trouble sharing, they want to do activities that interest them alone. But – at other times, they are all best buds: laughing, cuddling, and playing together. My personal goal as a Mom is not to eliminate the arguing and difficult times. I recognize they are going to happen no matter what I do. My goal is to maximize the opposite. I aim to provide activities, games, and time for my kids to bond, play, and enjoy each other's company.

### 1. Compete against Mom and Dad

Competition, in general, does not do much for my kid's bonds. But... team up and compete against Mom and Dad – and watch those kids unite! Physical games are ideal – tag, flags, hide and seek, or a water fight. Mom and Dad versus the kids is tons of fun for both sides. A water fight especially may be just be the motivation your kids need to work together – the opportunity to soak their parents!

### 2. Messy Play

One of the main differences in our house between the adults and the children is level of enjoyment out of messy things. I am all for messes for the sake of fun and learning. But, being completely honest, I would be perfectly fine without participating in 'slime', 'gloop', or 'gluck' activities. However my kids, I do believe, may perish without being able to get crazy messy. So, my children bond over their utter love for playing with [messy and kind of gross] doughs. It doesn't really matter what their mutual interest is, find whatever it may be for your kids – and jump all over it!

### 3. Make Birthdays a Big Deal

We do big birthdays in our house. Not big in cost or style – just big on celebrating our special birthday boy or girl. In our house, it is their one very special day to be all about them. They get to choose dinner, games, activities, special snacks, everything! And we aim to spend the day making, doing, and being as a family. Since our focus is on activities and time, we don't get too much jealousy – as everyone is participating. And since everyone has a birthday, everyone knows they get a special day too. Each brother or sister has a full day to think about and appreciate the birthday boy or girl.

### 4. Have an Annual Sibling Sleepover Party

Once a year we do a great big sister and brothers sleep over.

In our house it takes place on Christmas Eve. It started the very first year Madeline became a big sister. She slept on the floor by Sam's crib. It has been a much loved family tradition ever since. The kids now all sleep on the floor, snuggled in [and eventually ... eventually] a sleeping mound. There is tons of giggling and storytelling and snacking that goes on. Including a lot of sneakiness that I pretend not to know about (cookies at 10 o'clock? Just once a year!) This has been such a wonderful bonding tradition for my kids.

### 5. Family Time

Spending time together as a family is a wonderful way for siblings to bond. Going on outings, having many experiences, and spending lots of time as a complete family (whatever that may look like for you) is important for bonding. It will give your kids memories and lots of "remember when!" opportunities. We have many traditions that we do every year in the hopes that when our children get older they will still want to participate in some fun family outings.



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I have realized that arguments will happen and that, just as quickly, the giggles will happen too. And at the end of the day, my three truly do love and care about each other. Having multiple kids can certainly pose some challenges, but I am so happy that my children have siblings to grow, love, and learn with.

Do you have any activities that have helped your children bond?

