

Welcoming Baby

*How to help big
sibling transition*



FAMILY
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What to Expect

Bringing home a new addition to the family is a major transition for everyone. It can feel overwhelming for parents and siblings, as the new baby needs extra special time and attention. Your older child may react in unexpected ways while they work to make sense of their new family dynamic.

Aggression or Rule Breaking

It is not uncommon for older children to show aggression towards the new baby or act out. While standing firm with rules that physical harm is not allowed, be sure to praise your child's positive behaviors as often as possible. Help your child redirect aggression and self-regulate through safe activities like coloring a picture of anger or growling like a lion.

Regression

Older siblings, particularly at the toddler age level, may demonstrate regressive behaviors such as toilet training set backs or thumb sucking. These are normal reactions to dealing with stress that are best met with attention, love, and assurance.

Preparing for New Sibling's Arrival

Before Baby Arrives

- Talk with your child about the new baby and what they can expect. Use simple, age appropriate language to describe the baby's growth during pregnancy. Help your child gain an accurate picture of what the baby will be like as a newborn: they will mostly sleep, eat, and cry. Incorporate books on babies, siblings, and photos of the older sibling as a baby.
- Give your child a doll or toy so that they can play being a caregiver too.
- Explain to your child how the new baby will need a lot of attention and encourage them to be involved by helping make artwork for the nursery, shopping for baby supplies, or going to the doctor to hear the baby's heartbeat.
- Arrange for special time with your older child that will continue when the baby arrives for them to rely on and look forward to. During this time you can encourage your child to talk about their feelings about being a sibling and reinforce their new important role in the family.

- Work towards completing major transitions like a new room, toilet training, or new childcare schedule before baby arrives to establish the new routine.
- Help your child prepare a gift to give the baby when they arrive and have one prepared to for the big sibling as a gift from the baby

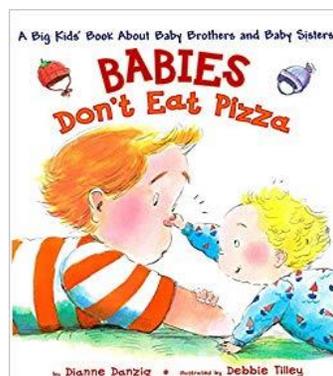
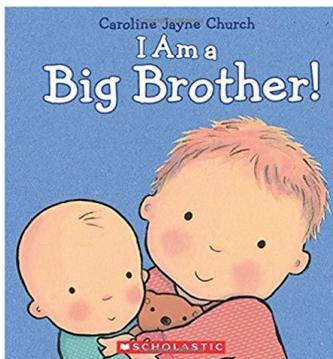
Bringing Home Baby

- Continue talking about feelings and involving your older child in caring for the baby. They can help bring diapers to you, talk to the baby, share toys, and hold with supervision. Parents should emphasize the word “gently”.
- Do not be alarmed if your older child initially shows no interest in the baby, this may take time. Continue encouraging their involvement, but do not force it.
- Hold or show affection to your older child whenever you see signs of jealous or regressive behavior forming. Reassure them and praise positive, big sibling behaviors. A sticker chart may be helpful for this encouragement.
- Keep normal routines as consistent as possible.

Allowing time to adjust will lead to the many celebrations of becoming a larger family.

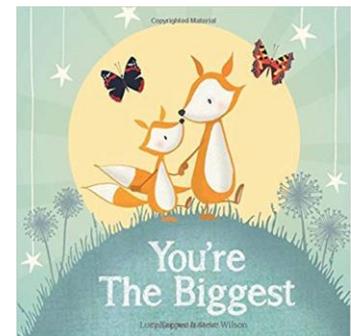
Book Recommendations

I Am a Big Brother
by Carolyn Jane Church



Babies Don't Eat Pizza
By Dianne Danzig and
Debbie Tilley

You're the Biggest
by Lucy Tapper



We're here for you!

The **Family Resource Center** is part of the Family and Child Life program and Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Central Washington University.

Our mission is to improve the lives of families in the University and broader Kittitas County community by providing programming to support families, coordinating family-related research, and providing civic engagement opportunities for students.

For more information, visit: <https://www.cwu.edu/family>

Be sure to check out all the pages in our child development resource series!

This page was developed from the following references:

- **Kids Health.** *Birth of a second child.*
<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/second-child.html>
- **Mayo Clinic.** *New sibling: Preparing your older child.*
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/new-sibling/art-20044270>
- **WebMD.** *Preparing siblings for baby's arrival.*
<https://www.webmd.com/women/prepare-children#2>
- **What to Expect.** *Helping your toddler adjust to a new baby.*
<https://www.whattoexpect.com/toddler/adjusting-to-new-baby-sibling-arrival>
- Photos by Chayene Rafaela, Jens Johnsson, and Edward Cisneros on Unsplash.com