

# Ways to handle fighting

Different levels of conflict between siblings may need different responses from parents. When children disagree and argue they are learning important skills that will help them in the world. But there are limits!

## Level one: normal disagreements

- Ignore it. Think about something pleasant.
- Remind yourself that this is an important learning experience about conflict resolution for your children.

## Level Two: situation heating up. Adult intervention might be helpful.

- Acknowledge their anger  
You two sound angry with each other!
- Reflect each child's point of view  
Oh, Belinda. You want to keep holding the rabbit because he's just cuddled into your arms? And John, you think you should have your turn holding him?
- Describe the problem with respect.  
Gosh, that's really tough. Only one rabbit but two children..
- Express confidence in the children's ability to find their own solution  
I know you two can work out something that's fair to each of you — and okay for the rabbit as well.

## Level three: situation potentially dangerous.

- Inquire  
Is this a play fight or a real fight?
- State house rule  
Play fights are permitted but real fights are not.

Let the children know that only play fighting is okay.

Remember, it has to stop if it's not fun for you both.

## Level Four: Situation definitely dangerous! Adult intervention required.

- Describe what you see  
I see two very angry children who are about to hurt each other.
- Separate the children  
It's not safe to be together. You both need to calm down. Into your rooms now!



Adapted from Faber, A. & Mazlish, E. (1987, 1998). *Siblings without rivalry*. Avon Books: New York.