TURNING PAGES,
BUILDING FUTURES

LEARNING WHERE LIFE HAPPENS

My Turn, Your Turn

Building back-and-forth into games, play, and everyday routines.

Short on time? Jump to page 3 for the Back-and-Forth Game Menu.

Start Here

Back-and-forth is the rhythm underneath conversation, play, and relationships: I go, you go, I go again. Some children wait to be included; others grab every turn. Either way, the skill is the same - noticing that a turn has two halves, and that the other person's half is what makes the game worth playing.

The big idea: A turn isn't just taking something - it's knowing the game continues with someone else.

Short, visible, well-marked turns teach the pattern: my turn ends, your turn begins, and the fun comes back to me. Every routine that trades turns is practice for every other one.

Try This: Build the back-and-forth

Start with turns your child can see

Try: Choose activities where a turn is visible: rolling a ball, stacking blocks, dropping pieces into a container, feeding cards into a slot. If the turn can be held, seen, and handed over, it's easier to understand.

Plan the activity

Try: Choose a toy with multiple parts that your child enjoys. Take turns using the pieces to reach the same goal—stacking blocks, completing a puzzle, or building something together. Start with an activity your child enjoys, and keep the interaction playful.

Say whose turn it is

Try: Use short, consistent words: "My turn... your turn!" Finish your turn before handing it over. Repeating the same phrases helps your child anticipate the pattern

Make your turn worth watching

Try: Keep your turn short and interesting: a funny face, a sound, one comment about what your child just did. Your turn is also a model of what a turn can be.

Put words to the play

Try: Talk about what you're doing and what your child does. "I'm rolling!" "You caught it!" "My turn—your turn!" Add playful sounds, action words, or a little more language than your child uses. Keep it natural; you're sharing the experience, not testing what your child can say..

Copy what your child does

Try: Let your child take the lead. Copy their action, sound, or movement, then pause to see what happens. Imitation can make the interaction feel more reciprocal and give your child a reason to notice what you're doing.

Pause at your child's turn

Try: Offer the ball or piece and pause. A reach, look, sound, gesture, or word may signal that your child is ready for a turn. Respond to their cues. If they don't join in, keep playing yourself or try a different activity.

Build trust with preferred toys

Try: Initially hand the toy back to your child promptly so they learn that allowing you a turn doesn't mean losing access to something they enjoy. Giving up the toy can be hard, so make the return predictable.

Keep early turns short

Try: Two or three exchanges are plenty at first. End while the game is still fun and your child wants to come back, then build up the length over time.

Pick one game or routine and aim for three back-and-forth turns.

What to look for

You don't need formal data to notice whether turn-taking is developing. Over several games, watch for:

- ☐ Reaching toward you or the object at their turn
- ☐ Watching what you do during your turn
- ☐ Handing something back or offering it
- ☐ Waiting - even briefly - while you finish
- ☐ Starting the exchange themselves

One small change is information - and a place to build from.

If it doesn't work...

If the back-and-forth isn't happening, that isn't a verdict on your child. It is information. Try:

- Make turns shorter. A one-second turn is still a turn.
- Make your turn quieter. A turn that's too exciting may pull attention away from the exchange.
- Offer the turn halfway. Hold the object out but don't let go, and wait for a signal before you release it.
- Trade with a partner first. Let your child watch two people trade turns before expecting them to join.
- Take turns at your child's pace. Don't rush the exchange or expect an immediate response. Even one or two shared turns are a place to start.
- If your child grabs the toy back, make turns shorter or use two similar toys so you can each have one. Build the back-and-forth gradually.

Remember: *Missing a turn isn't failure. Noticing there was a turn to take is where this skill starts.*

Want more practical ideas?

Get practical, doable strategies for teaching your own child at home - what to try next, how to break it down, and how to make it fit your family's routines. Explore PAGE Resources → Or, if you'd like occasional practical ideas delivered by email, **join the PAGE list at pageaba.com.**

Need help figuring out what to try?

Every child is different. If you're trying strategies at home and aren't sure what to change, PAGE can help you identify practical, individualized ways to support learning, communication, participation, and independence in everyday life. **Learn more or schedule a consultation at pageaba.com.**

LEARNING WHERE LIFE HAPPENS

Back-and-Forth Game Menu

Simple ways to share an activity, take turns, and keep the fun going.

You don't need special toys or a planned lesson. Start with something your child enjoys. Take a turn, make room for theirs, and see what happens.

Pick a Game and Give It a Try

Circle the game you will try.

The game	Your turn	Their turn might be...
Roll the ball	Roll it toward your child.	Reaching for it, pushing it back, or sending it another way.
Build a tower	Add a block.	Adding a block, knocking it down, or handing you one.
Drop it in	Drop a toy into a container.	Dropping one in, taking it out, or handing you another.
Bubbles	Blow bubbles.	Popping, reaching, pointing, or signaling for more.
Make some music	Clap, tap, or play an instrument.	Making a sound, moving to the rhythm, or copying your action.
Move together	March, sway, or do a silly movement.	Joining in, choosing a movement, or creating a new one.
Sing together	Sing a familiar line or do an action.	Joining with a sound, gesture, movement, or word.
Make something silly	Make a funny face, sound, or pretend sneeze.	Laughing, looking, copying, or adding their own silly ideas.
Everyday helper	Put one item in the basket or pass you a spoon.	Adding an item, handing you something, or choosing what comes next.

How did their turn go? What did you notice?