Fair Shares

Share out a snack three different ways: equally, by who is hungriest, and by who helped. Everyone argues for the fairest. A first taste of why there is more than one honest meaning of fair.

AGE BAND	DURATION	GROUP SIZE	CONCEPT
Ages 5–11	15 minutes	Two or more family members	Fairness

What your child practises

Your child can **explain that two different rules can both be called fair, and that choosing between them is a decision someone has to make.**

What you need

- Something to share that can be counted: grapes, crackers, slices of fruit
- No snack to spare? Use buttons, coins, or scraps of paper as pretend sweets

Why it works

When people say a computer system should be "fair," they often disagree about what fair means without noticing. Children already have strong feelings about fairness, especially when food is involved. Sharing the same snack three ways makes the disagreement visible, and lets everyone see that each rule helps someone and leaves someone else feeling short-changed.

How to play

1. Count the snack together.
2. **Rule one, equal shares.** Everyone gets the same number. Set those piles aside.
3. **Rule two, by need.** Each person says how hungry they are from 1 to 5. Share out more to the hungrier people.
4. **Rule three, by effort.** Whoever helped make dinner or tidy up today gets more.
5. Look at the three ways of sharing side by side. Each person says which rule they would choose, and why. Then eat.

Make it easier, make it harder

- **Easier:** just compare equal shares and shares by hunger.
- **Harder:** ask your child to invent a fourth rule that they think beats the other three, then find someone it treats badly.

Talk about it

- Which rule gave you the most? Is that the one you picked?
- Was any rule unfair to someone? Who?
- If a computer had to share out school places or doctors' appointments, who should choose which kind of fair it uses?

If your child asks

"Can't a computer just work out what's fair?" A computer can follow a fairness rule very carefully, but it cannot choose the rule. That choice is about values, about what we think matters most, and people have to make it. When a system is called fair, it is always worth asking: fair in which way, and who decided?