

## Age Appropriate: Giving and Receiving

# The Gift of Receiving

### How to Help Kids Be Better Gift Recipients

Monday, December 6, 2010 06:00 AM

By Melissa Kossler Dutton

When Denise Pietzsch gave Kylie Kissler a gift the youngster already owned, the girl did not cry or complain. Instead, Pietzsch recalled, the birthday girl said, "Oh, that's OK," and immediately gave it to her sister.

The gesture warmed Pietzsch's heart.

"She was so sweet about it," said Pietzsch, a manners expert and owner of Etiquette and Protocol Image Consultants in Worthington.

While a child's instinct might be to pout or get upset over a duplicate gift, you can teach them to be gracious gift recipients, she said.

"You've got to start coaching them way ahead of time," she said. "Ask, 'What would you do if you got two?'"

Follow up with conversation and role playing about how to handle the situation, Pietzsch said.

That's the secret to Ann-Michel Kissler's success. The Dublin mother, pictured here with her children, spends a lot of time talking with her four kids about the giving and receiving of gifts.

The conversations started when Kylie, now 6, was small. After the birth of her sister four years ago, Kylie had difficulty sharing the spotlight.

"She had a real hard time with it," Kissler recalled. "When the second one came, we had to say it's not always about you. Not every gift is for you."

So Kissler got in the habit of telling her kids to be thankful whenever they did receive a gift. She also stresses that it's not the gift that's special: It's that the person thought to give you a gift that counts. It's a lesson kids can grasp if you repeat often enough, she said.

She also instructs her kids to say thank you for any gift regardless of whether they like it.

"I don't have a problem with you not liking something," she said. "You just have to say 'Thank you.'"

Pietzsch suggests teaching children to say things like, "Thank you for thinking of me," or "It's so nice of you to get me something."

At holiday time, it's important to remind children that not everyone is going to give them a gift, she added.

Kissler also talks to her kids about what type of behavior she expects before they attend birthday parties. She reminds them that all the presents are for the birthday child and that their turns will come on their own birthdays. The discussions discourage her kids from rushing the birthday boy or girl and trying to "help" open the presents.

"Nobody wants that kid at the party," Kissler said.

Birthday parties are one of the biggest challenges for kids, agreed Pietzsch.

"It's good to practice," she said. "Go through every piece and part of it. They can learn to be gracious."