

Building Individuality

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Twins Trust trustees considered the issue and decided that it would be helpful to have an organisational policy which guides Twins Trust's work. They considered the published research and advice given by professionals and worked up the policy.

It is meant as a guide to best practice, but Twins Trust is keen to emphasise that it is ultimately up to parental choice how they decide to raise their children.

Twins Trust policy

It is important for multiple birth children to be treated as individuals in order for them to develop their own sense of individual identity.

Twins Trust recognises the:

- Need for multiple birth children to be treated as individuals in their own right.
- Benefits of developing individual character in multiple birth children.
- Supports efforts to develop the individual characterisation of multiple birth children. For example dressing them differently.
- Encourages the achievement of individuality in multiple birth children.

Twins Trust acknowledges:

- There may be occasions when it is appropriate for multiple birth children to be dressed the same. For example, school uniform, weddings or financial pressures within the family.
- That the decision of how to dress children is best left to the families.
- That some multiple children may have made an informed choice to wear the same clothes.
- That the focus must be from birth and not left until later on in life. Ideally individuality should be encouraged from around 18 months onwards as multiple birth children begin to develop a sense of themselves.

Top tips to enhance individuality:

- Use first names – rather than twins or triplets. Encourage others to do the same.
- Compare them with their peer group rather than each other. Be careful not to label one as good and the other as bad.
- Treat each one as an individual and recognise individual achievements.
- Do not compare one to the detriment of the other.
- As they get older try to encourage individual activities and interests.
- Recognise individual 'ownership' or 'things' perhaps by giving them separate drawers or cupboard space if they share a room
- Make joint celebrations special - eg give each child their own birthday cake or sing happy birthday separately
- Encourage each child to share their own opinions (important especially if there's a dominant twin)

And finally, as one adult twin recently reminded us - “parents, don't get overly concerned about individuality and discourage the unique bond that multiples have.”