A guide for grown-ups

Nell's Big Sister Rules

About the story

Nell is a little owl with a much-too-big teal cap. When baby Rory hatches, she writes her Big Sister Rules on a curl of bark: nobody touches my cap, the window branch is mine. Rory breaks every rule, and one by one Nell crosses them out, until a stormy night shows her what a big sister is really for.

Before you read

- Look at the cover. Who is the little grey owl? What do you think Nell is writing?
- Ask: what rules would you make if a new baby came to live with you?

While you read

- Each time a rule gets a red line through it, stop and ask: why did Nell cross it out?
- Say the refrain together: Rules are rules, said Nell.
- Do the mouse voice with Nell on the bedtime-story page.

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Questions to talk about

- Why did Nell write her rules?
- Which rule was the hardest for Nell to cross out?
- What rule would you write for your little brother or sister?
- Point to Nell when Rory chews her pom-pom. How does she feel?
- Look at Nell when she gives Rory her cap. How does she feel now?
- Why did Nell's new rules look so different from the old ones?

Ideas for after the book

- Write your own big sister or big brother rules on the rules sheet in the downloads.
- Practise hooting together, then let the little one try.
- Give the older child one real job with the baby, and thank them for it.

A small tip

Wanting to keep things for yourself is normal when a baby comes. Nell is never scolded for her rules; she changes them herself. Children often notice that.

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