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At 4 years old, Sakara is a very independent youngster in Isabukuru's group of mountain gorillas and began moving away from his mother for play sessions at an early age. With a father like dominant silverback Isabukuru, it's no wonder that he often ventures away from his mother, Ikaze. Isabukuru is well known for his love of young gorillas. Although silverbacks are generally tolerant of their offspring, few actively engage them in play and grooming sessions as Isabukuru does. In fact, Isabukuru's engagement with the youngsters is one of the hallmarks of this group.

A Powerful Lineage

Sakara may be small and clumsy now as he plays with his father and favorite playmates—juveniles Keza and Mushya—but his impressive family tree bodes well for him to one day become a powerful silverback. Sakara's mother, Ikaze, is a first-time mother and quite a small female. She gave birth to Sakara at the relatively young age of 8. Ikaze is not especially high ranking in Isabukuru's group, but she is a daughter of the famous silverback Titus and dominant female Papoose. Isabukuru, in addition to leading his own group, is also the son of a dominant silverback, Ziz, who led the group Dian Fossey named Group 5. Isabukuru's mother was Puck, who was also a dominant female. With so many dominant grandparents in his lineage, perhaps Sakara has also inherited the traits that will allow him to one day lead his own group. For now, he is enjoying the luxury of his youth—playing and relaxing without any responsibilities.

Infant Adopt: Sakara



Growing Up

Sakara, like many of the infants in Isabukuru's group, began venturing away from his mother at an early age. Fossey Fund staff speculate that the infants in Isabukuru's group become more independent earlier on because there is so much stimulation away from their mothers. Infant gorillas are naturally curious and with a silverback like Isabukuru, who is always ready to play, there is plenty for them to get into away from their mothers.

Sakara, in particular, gets lots of attention from Isabukuru. As might be expected, Sakara's mother spends a lot of time grooming him—but so does Isabukuru! In fact, during resting periods, Isabukuru grooms Sakara the most of all the young gorillas in the group and the Fossey Fund's tracker team enjoys watching the big silverback interact with his son. The difference in their sizes is remarkable, but Isabukuru is very gentle with the infant. Sakara's sex might play a role in the amount of attention he gets from his father. It could be that Isabukuru invests more in his male offspring than in his female offspring since Mushya, a juvenile male, gets more attention from Isabukuru than does Keza, a juvenile female.

Probably encouraged by Isabukuru's indulgent behavior, little Sakara follows him around constantly when he moves. Being a young male, observing closely and receiving a lot of attention from the dominant silverback will no doubt be important for Sakara's development into a silverback. He will have ample opportunity to watch how Isabukuru leads his group and engages with strange gorillas, which are essential skills for a male mountain gorilla.