



Preschool Connection

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Friendship Skills

The development of friendship skills now provides a base for making friends throughout life. Play with your child regularly to develop play and cooperation skills. Role play any problems your child may encounter with other children, ending them on a positive note.

At preschool your child will meet children from families who may be very different from

yours. You want your child to be able to make friends and be liked by others. Learning skills for getting along with others will help your child build healthy relationships. Children are quick to reject those who always want their own way, or act mean or aggressively. The friendship skills children develop early in life create opportunities for playing, sharing ideas, and having adventures.

Lack of friendship skills can be the start of not getting along with others and feeling like an outsider. When children are young, parents have opportunities to help with peer relationships. Being involved in your child's friendships makes it easier to help as he or she gets older.

Tips for Parents

- Accepting your child's feelings about other children helps him or her to continue expressing feelings and thoughts.
- Restating the specifics of what your child says shows that you are listening and helps clarify problems.
- Give your child regular practice at game playing and don't accept behavior that friends wouldn't.
- Role play your child's ideas for solving problems. Use dolls, figurines, or stuffed toys in your role play. This demonstrates how the ideas might work and allows your child to experience the perspectives of other children.
- Offer other children's perspectives.
- Plan activities before your child has a friend over.

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Getting along with others

A youngster learns how to act with others from family members. But she needs to try out these ideas with other children in order to gain competence and confidence in herself.

With other children she can work out different ways of acting and reacting that she probably wouldn't risk trying with you or other adults.

She can get practice being the boss as well as being bossed by another child.

She can be a leader as well as a follower; a teacher as well as a learner and a caregiver as well as the one receiving care.

With you, your child is limited to certain behaviors that are appropriate because she is a child. With other children, her options are just more open.

Further, just as parents need time away from a child-centered life, a child needs to get away from the adult-oriented world.

She needs to be with other people whose view of the

world and orientation toward life is similar to her own.

She needs to be able to work out satisfying relationships with other children in her own way, at her own pace, in terms of her own needs.

This is why "free play" time or recess can be the most important part of children's school day.

If your child is in a preschool program, make sure she's getting some time each day to be with other children in activities which the children themselves structure according to their needs and desires.

Also, try to work out an arrangement with other parents to get your children together occasionally or on a regular basis to play or go on outings

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(See Growing Child website at www.growingchild.com.)

Not Hide & Seek

Here's a simple activity-kind of like hide and seek-that kids can do by themselves and that can be adjusted for each child's age and ability.

First, identify what they're to look for: colors, shapes or sizes.

Colors are the easiest. Name the color, one for each child or just one for a group. Then the kids can walk around and find objects that are blue, red, etc. This probably works best inside the house where there are more things to look at.

When they have finished, they report-and show-how many they've found.

The leader can make a trip through the house to see if there are objects that were missed... and give clues to

help identify them.

Shapes are harder since circles; triangles and squares can be found within and upon other objects.

Sizes are hard, too. Start by asking the kids to find four things that would fit inside the stove oven or some other large object.

Discuss why some objects wouldn't fit.

By looking for and identifying colors, shapes and sizes in these games, kids are sharpening skills in reasoning, perception, observation and memory.

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These activities are not a test to see whether your child knows the skills. If your child has trouble, give enough hints so that he or she can be successful. If the activity is too difficult or becomes frustrating, stop and do something else that is fun. The main goal is to spend quality time with your child each day and to help your child be successful.

Activities 1–3 copied from First Step to Success with permission from Sopris West, Publishers .

1 Sharing for Real

1. When your child is playing with others, let them know that you understand that it is hard to share. Compliment any attempts. If they need help sharing, offer to time them as they take turns or suggest joint use of a toy.
2. Help your child by having the children address each other directly or by talking for one or both children. Say to your child "You look like you would like to use this toy, can you ask for a turn?" or "He looks like he is still playing with that toy, he'll be done soon, and it will be your turn."
3. Whenever you or your child share, point it out. For example, say to your child: "I saw you give the red crayon to Jose. That is great sharing."

2 Your Turn

1. Say "Pretend I am a child. Ask me to play something with you. While we play, tell me if I act in any way that makes you not want to play with me anymore."
2. As the pretend child, act out some good friendship behaviors like sharing, taking turns, and complimenting.
3. Also practice behaviors like being bossy or wanting to change the rules.
4. Prompt your child if he or she doesn't comment on your behavior.

3 I Want to Play

1. When your child is playing independently, try to get him or her to invite you to play.
2. Try watching and commenting, using a similar toy in a similar fashion in close proximity, tell your child that what he or she is doing looks like fun, and give compliments.
3. Ask if you can play as a last resort.

Next time ask : "If you want to play with someone, how do you let them know?"

Ideas that might help your child:

- Stand close and watch what is being played (sometimes others will invite you)
- Start playing something similar near the other children and slowly join in
- Ask if you can play

4 Toys: where to keep them

Toys should be kept in a place that is easy for a child to reach. Open shelves are best because a child can get toys out without help and can put them away (maybe with a little help_.

Open shelves can also teach a child many things. When each toy has its own place, it helps a child understand categories: blocks go here; books there.

Later on whenever a new toy is received, the child can figure out its category and when it should go. This kind of orderly thinking is helpful in learning mathematics and reading.

To help a child remember where each toy goes, you can put a picture of it either directly on the shelf or on the wall behind. As the child puts toys away, he will learn to match the toy to its picture.

Putting toys away can be a learning game. One day you could suggest, "let's put away all the red toys first." Then, "Now can put away all the blue toys?"

Another day, it might be square toys first, then round ones. Other categories are soft/hard, heavy/light, and big /little. These variations turn clean up into a form of play while the child learns about categories, likenesses and differences.

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