

Social Skills

Social skills are closely linked to a child's language ability. Children who have more advanced language skills are able to negotiate, share, compromise and empathise with others because they know the right words to say.

It is important to have realistic expectations of your child's social skills as these skills develop over time (see reverse for a table of development). For example, typically developing children only begin to play co-operatively with others at 4 years.

Activities to Encourage Social Skill Development

- ◆ The more practice your child has at interacting with other children the better their social skills will be. Playgroup, kinder, organising play-dates and even trips to the park will help your child learn how to interact with others.
- ◆ Role play - Use puppets or dolls and make up scenarios that have a social dilemma. For example, *a friend not wanting to play, a child pushing another child, meeting someone new etc.*
- ◆ Read stories that contain emotive sequences. Ask your child how they think the characters feel. Ask them why they think they are feeling this way. Remember to always help your child if they can't answer you.
- ◆ Social stories - These stories demonstrate to your child how to act in particular situations. For example, *when meeting someone new, when sitting at the snack table, when sharing toys at kinder.*
- ◆ Model appropriate social behaviour yourself throughout the day. This will demonstrate to your child how to interact with others.

----- *print, cut and share* -----

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The Development of Social Skills

- 2 years
 - Social awareness is very limited. Play tends to be solitary, although toddlers will closely observe and copy adults and other children. Direct interaction is minimal, apart from squabbles over toys!
- 3 years
 - Parallel play develops - children play alongside one another, with some interaction
 - Begins to learn to share and take turns
 - Begins to learn to manage physical aggression
- 4 - 6 years
 - Co-operative play develops. Children start to play group games. Games become more complex and organized.
 - 'Special' friendships begin to form
 - Learns how to play fairly and abide by rules
 - Can approach others and ask to join in with groups
 - Begins to learn to be assertive and to ask others to stop if they are being annoying
- 6 - 8 years
 - Learns to be a 'good winner' and a 'good loser'
 - Can empathise with others in distress and offer appropriate support
 - Conversation skills are developing - how to listen to others and take turns talking etc.
 - Can ask an adult for support when needed
 - Negotiation skills - including others in decision-making, learning to decide together and make suggestions rather than boss others around.
 - Able to say 'no' to peers when appropriate
- 8 - 12 years
 - Learns to speak confidently in front of a group
 - Learns to respect the opinions of others

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Source: <http://www.embracethefuture.org.au>

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