

Helping Your Child Learn and Play With Others

As the family of a four-to-five-year-old child, you may wonder:

“How can I help my child get along with others?”

“What are some ways I can help my child make friends?”

Supporting your child’s social interactions and relationships with peers prepares them to collaborate and thrive socially in early learning settings and later in school.



From four years old to kindergarten entry, children learn to:

Understand and express their own feelings and needs

Respond to the feelings and needs of others

Play together cooperatively and respectfully

Connect with peers and develop healthy friendships

Ways Families Support Children’s Social Skills

Being able to understand and express feelings is part of children’s emotional development and is important when children are learning how to get along with others. Families’ everyday interactions, routines, and experiences provide many opportunities to support children’s social skills. Each family has its own preferred ways of expressing and communicating about feelings. For example, some families express their feelings frequently. Other families are more reserved in how they show or talk about feelings. Through everyday experiences, families help children understand and express feelings, collaborate with others, and form relationships with peers.

Remember that each child approaches social interactions in their own way. For example, some children are very talkative and often initiate interactions with other children. Others may need more time to observe a new situation before engaging with other children. Your child may act differently from one interaction to the next, and they may communicate in a variety of ways.

As you think about your child, ask yourself:

- › What does my child like to do with other children?
- › How will I help my child express their feelings and preferences when playing with others?
- › When my child enters social interactions in a new setting, how will I support them?



ACTIVITY IDEAS for Families

When reading or telling stories, explore subjects like feelings, friendships, and conflict resolution. Check with a library or a school lending library for books or audiobooks. Share your thoughts about the emotions and behaviors of characters: “The boy seems happy. He’s hugging his auntie,” or “All the farm animals are having fun dancing together.” Ask your child for their ideas: “How does Bear feel to have Puma as a friend?” or “You noticed that the snake took shelter in the burrow the tortoise dug. I noticed that too! That is one way the snake and tortoise helped each other.”

During meals, model social skills. Show your child ways to share, take turns, or help others. Ask about daily experiences: “What did you like about playing outside today?” or “What is something funny that happened today?” After your child shares, take a turn to respond. You might also encourage your child to help: “Can you help me pour your little brother’s milk?”

When communicating with others, invite your child to contribute. Encourage your child to communicate in a variety of ways, such as drawing and writing. You might ask: “Let’s send a photo of you and your toy truck to Lola. What should we text her?” or “I’m going to send this get-well-soon card to your grandma. Will you write your name on it?” Invite your child to make a drawing: “It’s Tía Adriana’s birthday. I think she’d like a picture from you. Wow, you drew such a detailed dinosaur. It reminds me of the fossils at the museum in Las Vegas that Tía loves.”

When playing, encourage your child to interact with other children. You might visit a playground, attend a family gathering, or participate in a community event. Help your child engage in social interactions: “You can go on the swings with your cousin,” or “I wonder what those children are playing? Let’s go ask them.” Offer guidance when needed: “I wonder if you need some time to watch what the others are playing before you join?” or “You can ask your sister for a turn.”

Learn More About Children’s Social Skills

Explore more about your child’s development using the [Nevada Pre-Kindergarten Standards](#). Below is a summary of key knowledge and skills from the standards that relate to children’s social skills.

Approaches to Learning

Children are curious and engage in play with others.

Social Emotional

Children understand their own needs and interests and those of their peers.

Social Studies

Children interact with peers and work together to contribute to their community.

Language and Early Literacy

Children communicate their feelings and preferences.



The project described herein is supported by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), awarded to the Nevada Department of Education, Grant Number 90TP0099 from the Office of Early Childhood Development, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Early Childhood Development, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

