



How can so much fun get my child ready for school?

Getting along with other children and adults is an important social skill for children headed to school. You can give your child opportunities to practice their social skills by playing make-believe games and in real situations by reminding them to use their skills at the right moment. Provide constructive feedback. Some important social skills you can help your child develop include; listening, speaking up, introducing yourself, asking if you can play, knowing what you are feeling, and solving problems with other people.

Try these at home!

- **Pretend you're meeting a new friend.** Find some props that help you and your child pretend to meet each other on the playground or at a local store. Begin a conversation. Maybe you are lost and looking for directions or you're on the swing and want her to join you. Encourage your child to ask questions and trade information. You could try this by having a pretend phone conversation too.
- **Teach empathy.** Empathy is the ability to "stand in someone else's shoes." By modeling empathic behavior - and pointing out situations that call for empathy—parents can generate sympathetic responses in their kids. For example, if you and your child see someone being hurt (in real life, on TV, or in a book), talk with your child about how that person must feel. Find opportunities at home to encourage your child to imagine how his sister or brother feels. Name the feelings (she's angry, sad, frustrated) so that your child can use them in the future.
- **Invite other children to play.** Plan a playdate. Rehearse with your child what he can do with the friend coming over to play. Plan ahead and put away toys that discourage social interaction or may provoke fighting. That means putting away toys designed for solitary play, like video games. And if your child can't bear to share something, it's best to hide it until the play date is over.



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Friends

Things to say:

- **"Hi, my name is _____. What's yours?"**

Encourage your child to practice introducing himself to others. You can teach her to shake hands and look at people directly.

- **"Can I play with you?"** Encourage your child to practice asking other kids if she can play with them. Use opportunities like being at the park to practice.

- **"Do you want to share my toys?"** Help children learn to share, have empathy for others, and be active participants in their interactions with others.

Read All About It:

How to Be a Friend: A Guide to Making Friends by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

Making Friends by Fred Rogers

Join In and Play (Learning To Get Along), by Cheri J. Meiners



Illustrations by Corey Smigliani

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