



Helping Your Child Develop Friendships

Friends enrich our lives, improve our self-esteem and provide support during tough times. Learning how to form successful friendships is a skill that will be used and built upon for the rest of a child’s life. There are many ways that caregivers can provide support for the development of this important skill.

Encourage Friendly Behaviors

We want to help children make positive choices with peers. When in a social setting (like at the park or playing with friends or siblings), remind your child about good friendship skills and offer lots of praise when you see them. Examples include:

Skill	How to Praise
Taking Turns	<i>“Great job waiting so patiently for your turn!”</i>
Sharing Toys	<i>“I like the way you shared your toy with her.”</i>
Helping a Friend	<i>“Wow, that was very nice of you to help him clean up.”</i>
Being Flexible	<i>“That was very friendly to agree to play what she wanted.”</i>
Asking Permission	<i>“Nice job asking to use the basketball first.”</i>
Problem Solving	<i>“I really like the way you two worked that out in such a calm way!”</i>

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Playdates: Supervised playdates are great opportunities for children to practice and strengthen their social skills. Consider having a conversation with your child in advance to help prepare for a positive social experience:

- Talk with your child about what it means to be a good host. What will your child do to make their guests feel comfortable?
- Have your child pick out a few games before the playdate. How will your child know when it’s time to move on to the next game?
- Ask your child how they will know if their guests are having a good time. Are they smiling? Laughing?

Group Activities: Group activities such as sports teams, music classes or art clubs provide opportunities to learn to work together and develop new friendships. What are some group activities your child might enjoy?