



LOOK Strategies for Families: Friendship Skills

WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Friendship skills are strategies that support your child to learn and use **social skills**. **Social skills** help children to make and keep friends. They help children to be part of a group or community. Examples of **social skills** are:

- ◆ Having a conversation
- ◆ Taking turns, sharing, and waiting
- ◆ Listening to others
- ◆ Noticing and caring how other people feel
- ◆ Learning to respect and value differences

Children learn these skills by watching and listening to people around them. They get better at using them with lots of *practice*. Preschoolers often need our support to learn and use these skills. We can give encouragement and reminders during play. We can also teach children what it means to be a good friend and how to get along with others.



HOW TO AND TIPS:

Help your child to learn about social skills:

- Point out when others are being a good friend and *how* (“Good friends are kind to others. They notice when someone else is feeling sad and try to help.”).
- Talk about disagreements that might come up with others and how to handle them.
- Read books about friendship and getting along with others.
- Play “What would you do if...” games to practice problem-solving to share and play with others.

Set your child up for success *before* playing with a friend:

- Choose a time of day that your child is at their best. Aim for a time they won’t be tired or hungry.
- Think about location. Would meeting at a park be better than having a friend come over to your home? Is there a room at home that would work best and where you could be close by?
- Choose materials that can be shared. Put away special toys that might be difficult for your child to share, such as a favorite doll, truck, or chair.

Be available to give support during play if needed:

- Give support only if needed. Try not to interrupt the play or take over.
- Give choices for appropriate activities if children seem stuck.
- Model problem-solving if conflict arises.
- After play, talk about what went well and what your child could have done differently. Give praise, especially if you know something was hard for them.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Supporting Friendship Skills at Home

- ◆ Read a book about sharing and ask, “What did they share in the book? How did it make their friend feel when they shared? What will you share when your friend comes over to play tomorrow?”
- ◆ Be on hand during play. If it seems like your child and their friend are having trouble getting started, you can give support. For example, picking up toy tools and saying, “This table is a little wobbly. Can you two help me to fix it?” If there is an argument you can say, “I see you’re both upset. What is the problem? What can we do to fix it?”



LOOK at you: You are the expert on your child. We’d love to hear from you! What social skills do you value in your family? How do you support your child to be part of a larger community?