



# Making Friends: Preschoolers and Social Development

## Do preschool age children really need to have friends?

Learning to make friends with other children is an important part of developing social skills. Preschool is one of the best places for children to learn and practice these skills with each other. While mothers and fathers can help their children develop good manners, respect for others, and good communication skills children often learn the most about relationships like friendship from other children. For one thing, your family is always your family no matter what. Friends are less likely to put up with all the things that mothers and fathers do.

Early friendships are the building blocks for later adult relationships among neighbors and co-workers. Friends help us solve problems and let us know through their similar experiences that we are not alone. Friends provide emotional support and role models for coping.

## What kinds of skills does my child need to make friends?

Children make friends when they have a variety of skills which take time and practice to develop. Children develop these social skills earlier or later within age ranges. Some children have different temperaments and/or different cultural or life experiences which may make some of these skills easier to gain and use.

Here are some examples of skills that children need to make friends:

- an ability to express ideas and accept the ideas of others
- an ability to ask others to join their activities or make them feel part of the group
- an ability to solve conflicts
- an ability to pay attention to other children
- an ability to offer praise and affection to other children

- an ability to understand how their own words and actions will make other children feel
- an ability to approach and greet other children (even if there is a lot of watching beforehand)
- an ability to tell other children things about themselves such as their favorite games
- an ability to ask other children questions about themselves
- an ability to extend invitations to play

It's not always easy to make friends even for children who have mastered some of these skills. Sometimes it takes real persistence and sometimes it just won't work out. Your child may be frustrated or disappointed. It's helpful to talk about these feelings and reassure your child that there are many special qualities about them that another child is sure to appreciate.

## Why are some children friends and not others?

Children make friends with a particular child or group of children for different reasons. To grown-ups these friendships may seem unpredictable. Children usually make friends with other children who are like themselves in some way. For example, they may have a similar appearance, they may have the same likes and dislikes, or they may enjoy the same style of play. Other friendships develop when an attachment forms between two children because they are neighbors and see each other every day or because they have been in the same childcare, school or even classroom since they were babies. Still other friendships develop when one child is the teacher or mentor of another child, showing them the ropes if they are new to the school or guiding them through the best ways to join in a game. Some children will have a small group of close friends, one best friend, or an array of loose associations. We all know adults who form these different kinds of bonds. Like adults, children form different friendships based on their temperament, their needs, or their culture.



## Should grown-ups help children with their friendships?

There are many ways that mothers, fathers, teachers, and others can be helpful whether kids are having difficulty making friends. But, it's also important to give kids the space they need to try out these ideas on their own. Once you have practiced these suggestions with your children, take a step back and let the children make their own way.

- You and your child can learn and play games together. You can model some of the friendship abilities that were suggested above. This will give children ideas and practice for doing this on their own with new people too.
  - Talk to your child about hurt feelings, their own and those of others. This is the first step toward learning how their own words and actions may "put off" other children.
  - Make sure your child has time and opportunity to play with other children.
  - Help children feel good about themselves.
- Talk to your child's teacher. Find out if there is a child that might make a good friend for your child and arrange a play date. Sometimes, a little nudge in the right direction is all it takes. Or, the teacher may have other ideas about how to get your child into the mix such as pairing your child with another who could use some help with schoolwork.
  - Talk to your children about friendships. Your interest in their feelings and experiences can provide opportunities to brainstorm when there are bumps in the friendship road.
  - Role-play ways that your children might be able to join a group. This practice is helpful in getting kids thinking about things they haven't tried before such as being more direct or learning to be subtle in their approach to others.
  - Give children time and space to solve conflicts on their own before you intervene. If you do need to step in, help all the children involved understand that they can compromise to get some of their needs met while the other children get some things that they want as well.

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# Booster Seat Safety Tips

Everything you need to know about kids in booster seats.

Kids who have outgrown their car seats are not quite ready for a seat belt alone – although they might try to convince you otherwise. Instead, have them move to a booster seat that makes the adult seat belt fit properly when they have outgrown the car seat. Booster seats can actually be pretty cool. Here are a few tips to make sure your kids are ready for and safe in a booster seat.

- When your child is seated in the booster seat, make sure the lap belt fits low across the hips and the shoulder belt is across the shoulders
- Do not place the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back. Return your child to a car seat if you cannot get a good fit of the seat belt when using the booster seat.
- Older kids get weighed and measured less often than babies, so check your child's growth a few times a year. Generally, kids need to use a booster until they are about 4 feet 9 inches tall and weigh between 80 and 100 pounds.
- Talk with the drivers who transport your big kids so they understand that booster seat use is a must when your child is in their vehicles.

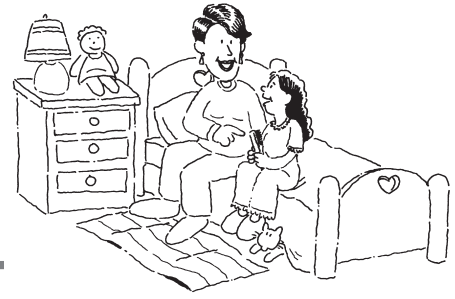


- Keep using a booster seat with the vehicle lap AND shoulder safety belts until your child passes the following Safety Belt Fit Test:
  - The child's knees should bend at the edge of the seat when his or her back and bottom are against the vehicle seat back; and
  - The vehicle lap belt should fit across the upper thighs; and
  - The shoulder belt should fit across the shoulder and chest. Children are usually between 8 and 12 years old when the seat belt fits them properly.

*Children seated in a booster seat in the back seat of the car are 45% less likely to be injured in a crash than children using a seat belt alone.*



# Healthy Communication With Your Child



Healthy communication with your child is one of the most important and rewarding skills that you can develop as a parent. It also makes the tough parts of parenting (such as disciplining your child) much easier and more effective. Good communication is a two-way street, meaning that listening to your child is just as important as talking to him.

When you talk in a calm and caring manner, you let your child know what you expect of him and give him information that he needs. You also show him that when you ask him to calm down and control his temper, you are practicing what you preach.

Listening to your child helps you learn more about what is going on with your child. You can learn his thoughts about a subject, how he is getting along socially, what problems he may be having, and whether your child is getting the message that you are trying to communicate.

Good communication is needed so that you can be a good teacher for your child and know what is happening in your child's life.

## Why is healthy communication important?

Healthy communication is important because it helps your child

- Feel cared for and loved
- Feel safe and not all alone with her worries
- Learn to tell you what she feels and needs directly in words
- Learn how to manage her feelings safely so that she does not act on feelings without thinking
- Talk to you openly
- Learn to listen to you

Healthy communication also helps *you*

- Feel close to your child
- Know your child's needs
- Know you have powerful tools to help your child develop and grow
- Manage your own stress and frustrations with your child

## What are the building blocks of healthy communication?

Here are a few important ways to build healthy communication

- **Be available.** Make time in everyone's busy schedule to stop and talk about things. Even 10 minutes a day without distractions for you and your child to talk can make a big difference in forming good communication habits. Turn off the television or radio. Give your undivided attention to your child. Sit down and look at your child while you talk. Those few minutes a day can be of great value.
- **Be a good listener.** When you listen to your child, you help your child feel loved and valued. Ask your child about his feelings on a subject. If you are not clear about what your child is saying, repeat what you are hearing to be sure that you understand what your child is trying to say. You do not

have to agree with what your child is saying to be a good listener. Sharing his thoughts with you helps your child calm down, so later he can listen to you.

- **Show empathy.** This means tuning in to your child's feelings and letting him know you understand. If your child is sad or upset, a gentle touch or hug may let him know that you understand those sad or bad feelings. Do not tell your child what he thinks or feels. Let him express those feelings. And be sure not to minimize these feelings by saying things like, "It's silly to feel that way," or "You'll understand when you get older." His feelings are real to him and should be respected.
- **Be a good role model.** Remember, children learn by example. Use words and tones in your voice that you want your child to use. Make sure that your tone of voice and what you do send the same message. For example, if you laugh when you say, "No, don't do that," the message will be confusing. Be clear in your directions. Once you get the message across, do not wear out your point. If you use words to describe your feelings, it will help your child to learn to do the same. When parents use feeling words, such as, "It makes me feel sad when you won't do what I ask you to do," instead of screaming or name calling, children learn to do the same.

## Keys to healthy communication

### Do

- Give clear, age-appropriate directions such as, "When we go to the store I expect you to be polite and stay with me." Make sure your child understands what you have said. Sometimes children do not fully understand the meanings of words they hear and use.
- Praise your child whenever you can.
- Calmly communicate your feelings.
- Be truthful.
- Listen carefully to what your child says.
- Use your talking times as teachable moments – do not miss opportunities to show your child healthy communication.
- Model what you want your child to do – practice what you preach.
- Make sure that when you are upset with your child, she knows that it is her behavior that is the problem, not the child herself.

### Don't

- Give broad, general instructions such as, "You'd better be good!"
- Name call or blame. "You are bad" should be replaced with "I don't like the way you are acting."
- Yell or threaten.
- Lie or tell your child half-truths.
- Use silence to express strong feelings. Long silences frighten and confuse children.

## Discipline is not punishment

Part of a parent's job is to discipline a child. Discipline is not punishment. Discipline is actually a form of communication. It means teaching children appropriate behavior and correcting inappropriate behavior.

How do you change a child's behavior? The most effective way is through healthy communication. Make sure to teach your child what positive behavior is and praise him when he behaves the way you want him to. Focus on the things he does right and he will be less likely to do things you do not want him to do.

No matter how old your child is, he needs you to calmly and clearly explain (in language that he can fully understand) what you expect from him and what the consequences will be (for example, taking away a privilege) if he acts inappropriately. Then, if the child does misbehave, follow through on the consequences you and he have already discussed. This way, you are not reacting purely out of anger or frustration.

## Keeping your cool

There are times when all parents feel that they are out of patience. However, it is always important to find ways to help your child to behave without hurting her feelings. Here are a few ways to calm yourself when you feel stressed, before you try to talk with your child.

- Take a few deep breaths very slowly.
- Wait 5 minutes before starting to talk to your child.
- Try to find a word to label what you are feeling (such as "disappointment"). Say it to yourself and be sure that it is appropriate for you child.
- Share your feelings of frustration with your spouse or a friend.
- Do not hold grudges. Deal only with the present.
- Seek professional help if you feel that you have lost control.

## Quick ways to offer praise

A smile and a short phrase can communicate valuable information. Here are just a few phrases that will go a long way.

- Outstanding!
- Nice work!
- Terrific!
- You made my day!
- You are so responsible.
- Good for you.
- You are really growing up!
- I like the way you share.
- Awesome!
- You figured it out on your own.
- I like the way you took care of that.
- What a good listener you are!
- You are so important to me.
- I love you so much!
- Bravo!

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

## From your doctor

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## AGES 2-3

The following are guidelines for a 2 to 3 year old child. A child's calorie needs vary depending on activity level and appetite. For more specific nutrition information, talk with your physician or IHA Nutrition Specialist.



### DAIRY

Amount per day:  
4 SERVINGS

One serving looks like:

- 1/2 cup low fat or fat-free milk

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- 1/2 cup low fat yogurt

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- 1/2 cup soy milk

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- 1/2 ounce cheese



### GRAINS

Amount per day:  
6 SERVINGS

One serving looks like:

- 1/3 to 1/2 cup dry cereal

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- 1/4 to 1/2 cup cooked cereal

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- 1/4 to 1/2 slice bread

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- 1/4 to 1/2 bagel or roll

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- 1/4 to 1/3 cup rice, pasta, potatoes

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- 2 to 4 whole grain crackers



### PROTEIN/ MEAT

Amount per day:  
2 SERVINGS

One serving looks like:

- 1 to 3 Tbsp meat, poultry, fish or tofu

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- 1/4 cup cottage cheese

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- 1 egg

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- 1 Tbsp peanut butter

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- 1/4 cup cooked beans



### FRUIT

Amount per day:  
2-3 SERVINGS

One serving looks like:

- 1/2 small piece fresh fruit

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- 2 Tbsp dried fruit

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- 1/4 to 1/3 cup canned, cooked or fresh chopped fruit

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- 1/4 to 1/3 cup juice



### VEGETABLES

Amount per day:  
2-3 SERVINGS

One serving looks like:

- 1/4 to 1/3 cup cooked, canned or chopped fresh vegetables

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- 1/4 cup raw, leafy vegetables

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- 1/4 to 1/3 cup juice



### FATS

Amount per day:  
3 SERVINGS

One serving looks like:

- 1 tsp oil, margarine or butter

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- 2 tsp salad dressing

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- 1/8 avocado

# SAMPLE MEAL PLANS

## AGES 2-3

These meal plans are designed as a guide for you in planning well-balanced meals. Well-balanced, nutritious meals include complex carbohydrates, lean protein, fruits, vegetables & healthy fats. Children this age should have two to three snacks between meals. See snack sheet for suggestions.

BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
½ pancake 1 tsp margarine or butter ½ cup berries ½ cup milk	⅓ cup macaroni and cheese ½ of a small piece of fruit ½ cup chopped veggies ½ cup milk	1 – 2 Tbsp chopped chicken 5 steak-type baked sweet potato fries ½ cup milk ½ cup canned, unsweetened fruit
⅓ cup cereal (4 grams of fiber or more per serving) ¼ medium banana ½ cup milk	1-2 Tbsp mashed beans ¼ cup cooked vegetables ¼ cup sliced strawberries ½ slice bread ½ cup milk	1-2 Tbsp chopped chicken ⅓ cup mashed potatoes ½ cup steamed green beans 1 tsp olive oil 4 oz yogurt ½ cup milk
½ cup oatmeal ½ cup canned chopped peaches ½ cup milk	½ grilled cheese sandwich ½ cup milk ¼ banana	1 to 2 Tbsp chopped beef ⅓ cup sweet potato with 1 tsp margarine ½ chopped fresh fruit
½ waffle with 1 tsp margarine ½ cup applesauce ½ cup milk	½ whole wheat english muffin ¼ cup mozzarella cheese 2 Tbsp pizza sauce ½ of fresh orange (sections) ½ cup milk	Beef fajita (grilled peppers & onions, 1 to 2 Tbsp steak, 1 Tbsp light sour cream, 2 Tbsp salsa, ¼ cup shredded cheese, 1 whole wheat or whole grain tortilla) 1 kiwi cut into slices with ½ cup vanilla ice cream Water
4 oz low fat yogurt ½ slice whole wheat toast with 1 tsp margarine or butter ½ cup milk	½ nutbutter (peanut/sun/almond) and jelly sandwich ½ small apple, sliced and peeled ½ cup milk	1 slice small cheese pizza 1 cup salad greens with 1 Tbsp salad dressing ¼ cup dried cherries Water
1 egg scrambled ½ piece whole wheat toast 1 tsp margarine or butter ½ cup milk	½ turkey sandwich ½ cup steamed green beans ½ cup milk ¼ small banana	⅓ cup spaghetti with sauce 1 small meatball ½ cup steamed broccoli and carrots ½ cup milk