



School Readiness Tip Sheet

Making Friends

Friends are important to young children. When children have good friendships, they do better in school and are more likely to grow up to be well-adjusted adults. It is important for parents to help their children learn to be good friends and to have good friends. Learning to get along with other children takes time, patience and practice.

You can support your child's learning about friendship by trying these ideas:



➤ **Start with short playtimes**, with just one other child. Gradually, increase the time or number of children as your child and his/her friends can handle it. Meeting at a park, the beach, or a neighborhood playground can reduce the difficulty young children have sharing their toys and space at home. Plan a variety of play activities, such as blowing bubbles or riding bikes.

➤ **Help your child understand that people have similarities and differences.** Children will learn to value themselves and get along with others when they realize we all are alike in some ways and different in some ways and that is fine.

- **Have reasonable expectations for sharing.** Some children already know how to share, but many won't really understand sharing until they're a little older. It might be easier for some children to share certain toys if they do not have to share everything. Plan to put special toys away while other children visit.
- **Stay calm** if your child has a hard time. Learning how to be friends and solve problems with others are important skills, that take time and practice.
- **Show belief that people can solve problems together.** Follow these six steps to help your child learn about solving problems with others. **1)** Acknowledge and name your child's feelings, especially if he or she cannot yet do that for his/herself. **2)** Ask children to tell about what happened in a conflict; do not assume you know what really happened. **3)** Restate what you understand the problem to be so everyone understands what went wrong. **4)** Ask children for ideas about how to solve the problem or offer your ideas about solutions. **5)** Allow children to choose a solution and **6)** support them to ensure the chosen solution works out.
- **Use words children can understand to make expectations clear.** "I know you are mad, but you may not hit other children." "You can ask for a turn." "You can ask, 'Can I play with you?'" Do not expect your child to understand long explanations when he or she is upset. If your child loses control, remove him or her and help your child regain control.
- **Show your child how to be a good friend.** Be sure your child sees you being the kind of friend you want him or her to be. You can demonstrate willingness to share or trade things. Talk out problems with other adults to find solutions. Show kindness and compassion. Use words to communicate your own feelings. Making friends is a lifelong process and will of course have its ups and downs. It helps to practice social situations with your child before they happen or go over them afterwards when your child is calm.

