

Tips for Parents to Help Their Child Develop Social Skills and Make Friends

Tips for Early Years

What to do	How to Do it
Meet Up with Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet with other parents and young children in different environments (homes, parks, stores, etc) ● Your child will benefit from being exposed to lots of language modeling, conversation modeling, and variety of environmental noises
Join a Music Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listening to music can help with auditory development ● Provides more opportunities to meet and interact with other children their age ● Music exposes children to rhythm and cadence examples, promotes listening skills, and promotes vocalizations and imitations of speech and language
Play Dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Play dates provide opportunities to meet with peers ● LSL strategies can be incorporated in activities and routines with the children ● Start with play dates with one child, then slowly add more children to play group ● For kids first learning how to play with others, provide structured and closely supervised play dates for short periods of time. A good activity for these initial play dates would be baking activities. Have your child put away toys that they are not ready to share with others. ● As your child works on making friendships, they can move away from pre-planned, structured activity to making their own play plans with their friends.
Find Auditory Friendly Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide opportunities for early social interactions to occur in quiet settings - try to limit background noise (such as TV, environmental noises, etc) ● Limit the amount of conversation partners for early social interactions
Make Listening Easier in Noisy Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Request tables in quieter areas at restaurants ● Utilize DM/Remote microphone to help give your child more direct access to their peers' speech

Educate Other Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Start conversations with other parents about your child’s hearing loss and technology ● Also helpful to explain to other parents what kind of communication methods you are working on with your child and what your expectations of your child are
Practice and Model Conversational and Social Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children learn from the language models provided to them ● Model lots of conversations with others to show them serve and return ● Use friendly language and body language ● Demonstrate listening to others
Teach Emotional Language and Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use every available opportunity to talk with your child about feelings (their feelings, other’s feelings, feelings of fictional characters) ● This will help work towards reading and recognizing the emotions of others, important skills needed in friendships
Support Theory of Mind Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theory of mind - ability to recognize others have thoughts and beliefs that are separate from our own ● It’s the foundation of social relationships ● This skill does not fully develop until at least 4 years old, but you can begin building this skill ● Role play with your child to practice taking other peoples’ perspectives. Begin role playing with people they have seen in everyday life, like mommy, daddy, teacher, or doctor. ● When reading books or watching TV, talk about the characters’ thoughts, feelings, ideas, and what they might do next.

Hearing First. (2021). *Help your child develop social skills and make friends*. Hearing First. <https://www.hearingfirst.org/b/blog/posts/help-your-child-develop-social-skills-and-make-friends>

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Tips for School Years

What to do	How to Do it
Meet Classmates' Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reach out to the families of your child's classmates and schedule play dates between the kids. ● This provides more opportunities for your child to build friendships
Participate in After School Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participation in after-school clubs and sports creates more opportunities for your child to make friendships ● They also expose your child to vocabulary specific to their after school activities and exposes them to more language and conversation modeling ● Make sure to communicate with the teachers and coaches in charge of the activities to create supports so your child can fully participate
Pre-Teach Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Before your child participates in games or activities, sit down with them to talk about the rules, how to participate, and what appropriate behaviors would be during these activities ● Talk about new situations, such as school field trips and school dances, to help them prepare. Discuss typical questions to expect from others, responses, questions to ask, and the unwritten roles of the situation. It can help to frame these discussions as social stories
Partner with Your Child's Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have conversations with your child's teacher to help them better understand their hearing loss, personality, and interaction style. ● Express your expectations for your child's educational and social development ● Convey that teachers should contact you if they need any further information or have any concerns
Focus on Positive Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk with your child about their friendships - sometimes children will continue friendship with bad friends because they are concerned about having lots of friends ● Talk about what a good friend does and if all of their friends are actually positive relationships ● If they have negative relationships, discuss why those are not good relationships and how to respectfully distance themselves from these negative relationships

Identify and Address Issues Early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If you notice certain things that make you feel concerned, bring it up with your child’s team. Your concerns are valid and you are the expert on your child
Talk About Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have discussions with your child about bullies, explaining that bullies are frequently motivated by their own personal challenges and pain. Help your child develop appropriate ways to deal with bullies
Teach Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk with your child about their hearing loss and how it impacts them ● Make sure they know the name of their devices, how they work, and why they need them ● Discuss strategies that help them hear best, such as asking for something to be repeated and for people to speak one at a time ● Talk to them about sharing their hearing loss with their friends. This will help empower them by taking ownership of their hearing loss, but also demystifies hearing loss for their friends
Learn about what’s popular with your child’s peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some kids may need to be made aware and informed about what is popular with their peers. ● It can be helpful to determine what is popular with their peers, then talk about these things at home. ● If there is a popular TV show, watch it with your child and help them learn the characters of the show and the plot points. ● If there is a popular video game or app, talk about the rules and vocabulary associated with the game
Model Texting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk about how to appropriately text others and what emojis mean ● Remember that texting does not convey tone or facial expressions

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