

## Tips for Improving Social Skills

The importance of play in developing social skills cannot be overestimated. In fact, the child learns social interaction through exploration, observation, and play. While playing, the child learns to pretend, take turns, and interact with others.

Play turn taking games such as rolling a ball back and forth. Whoever has the ball; it is their turn to talk. Play board games and discuss turn taking: my turn - your turn. When talking, turn taking can be taught directly; "It is my turn to talk, you may have a turn after I am finished."

Play charades to illustrate how much information is conveyed through body language. Watch T.V. with the sound off. Observe, label, interpret, and imitate actors' body language.

Play on/off game: state topic and have the child decide if the sentence is on or off the topic. Change topic: have the child tally the topic changes.

Use mirrors to look at expressions. Make a scrapbook using magazines and discuss the feelings shown by the posture, gesture, or facial expression. Play a "guess the feeling" game by making faces.

Use a tape recorder and play, "Name That Voice" by choosing the emotion through listening to the tone. Change the intonation of a sentence and see how the meaning changes. Discuss a social situation before it occurs.

Problem solve what can occur and how it can be handled. Role play greetings and manners. Write scripts to help relieve stressful social situations and reduce fear.

Structure play dates. Decide ahead of the play what activities will be played. Make sure turn taking is occurring. Make play dates full of fun for social success.

The child will repeat desired social skills when there is success.