

Social Interaction & Play

Social Interaction is key to the development of all speech, language and communication skills. By interacting with others, children learn that good conversations involve more than one person and can be fun!

Good interaction skills involve things like eye contact, taking turns, sharing enjoyment and having an interest in what someone else is saying or doing.

Play allows children to learn about the world around them. Children need to have a variety of experiences to help them explore their world and practise skills which are important for learning, such as sharing and taking turns.

Age	Minimum Expectations for Child
2	Interested in people and responds to them using facial expressions such as smiling or laughing. Will use pointing and will bring objects to show others. Enjoys social games such as peekaboo. Acts out simple play routines, e.g. 'feeding' toys, putting dolly to bed.
2 ½	Showing interest in other children. Sharing own enjoyment with others. Joining sequences together e.g. Making the tea and washing the dishes.
3-4 years	Likes to play with other children. Enjoys pretend and imaginative play.
4-5 years	Beginning to learn about how to communicate in different ways in different places e.g. speaking differently with friends and with teachers. Enjoys pretending to be another person and will act 'in character'.
6 years	Enjoys working as part of a group. Enjoys making friends and can understand more about body language e.g. understanding how someone feels from tone of voice or facial expression. Likes organising games with other children.
9 years	Empathises with others. Beginning to say what the listener wants to hear rather than the 'truth' e.g. being polite about unwanted presents. Knows how to make and maintain friendships.
11 years	Aware of and responds to other people's views. Aware of and influenced by peer pressure.

Here are 5 'Top tips' to help

Note Children learn best from real experiences and interaction with others. Make sure you give your child lots of chances to play and talk without screens switched on e.g. TV, phones, and tablets.

1	Remember, communication is much more than just words. Look for your child using pointing, facial expression, crying, making sounds, looking and reaching to tell you what they want. Respond to all your child's attempts to communicate with you.
2	Try to have only a few toys and books out at one time for you and your child to enjoy together.
3	Look carefully at what your child is interested in doing with their toys and try to copy them and join in.
4	Play lots of turn- taking games which encourage eye-contact, sharing and waiting. Make sure you choose games that your child needs you to help with e.g. blowing bubbles, rolling balls, wind-up toys.
5	When you know what your child wants, help them communicate more by waiting a moment or two before you respond. You may be surprised at what they can do/show you. e.g. offer a little then wait – instead of giving your child several grapes/snacks, give them only one so they need to ask/show you that they want more.