

## **Parent Tips for Socialization of Preschoolers**

Ann Densmore, Ed.D., author, *Your Successful Preschooler : Ten Skills Children Need to Become Confident and Socially Engaged* (Harvard Medical School publisher and Jossey-Bass, 2011).

1. Use the natural environment--parks, playgrounds, a farm or a special event--to talk about what you see, what you do and what is happening. You are using your environment as a tool to engage your child and developing language, emotion and play.
2. Talk about the child's actions during play and create conversation that is neither invasive nor repetitive. Instead, highlight the actions of their peers and talk about the main story theme of their play. The child will associate language with the action and use more words to express how he feels.
3. Try not to "drill" your child with questions. Rephrase what your child is saying and talk about what they are doing. When you ask a question, praise your child for using language to explain what they are thinking.
4. Create story themes for children that are coherent, organized, and appropriate for their developmental level. Find a theme that your child is interested in, and develop a story around it. Create a sequence of actions, a high suspense point, and an ending.

5. Develop activities that direct your child's attention toward projects that help that world, such as protecting the environment. You can create a compost pile to plant a garden.
6. Identify subtle cues (facial expression, body language, tone of voice, gestures) of peers and point them out to your child in order to help her recognize the emotions of others. Model genuine emotions with affect, using facial expression and language that conveys how you feel.
7. Engage your child in a gross motor activity such as throwing a ball, and then talk to him as he plays. This helps structure your child's thinking, improve language expression, and maintain eye contact.
8. Stop play when children use rough or threatening games. Stop teasing between peers and give your child the language to use when they are on their own, such as "That's not fair. I don't like it when you push me or call me a stupid name!"
9. Use real world events to teach moral values. Help children learn from stories in the news about how to treat others, develop their own moral ideas, and determine what is right or wrong according to their own culture.
10. Research says that a young child learns more from a person, a teacher or a parent rather than from television or videos. Limit the amount of time your child is using a screen or electronic media (television, computers, electronic gaming devices, etc.). 10 hours a

week on all of electronic devices is the maximum a child should be exposed to. Limit background television noise that will be detrimental to language development.

11. Keep a sense of humor and try to find positive aspects of a negative event. Children learn to find ways to cope when stressful events happen in their lives. If they seek out the positive, they feel better and adjust to the situation. This helps develop resiliency in children.
12. During a play date, help children find a shared interest (e.g. both want to be friends) and lay out options in order for them to come to an agreement. Help your child see that the final agreement may be different than they expect.
13. Provide sensory activities such as diving underneath a beanbag or jumping on a small trampoline and be aware of your child's need to engage in activities that calm him or help him organize.
14. School bullying is a widespread problem that compromises A CHILD'S ability to learn. Research says that 2.4 bullying episodes occur every hour within classrooms. Parents can access the Steps to Respect Bullying Program ([www.cfchildren.org/programs/str/overview/](http://www.cfchildren.org/programs/str/overview/)) and learn how to address this issue and connect to their child's school. This research-based program reduces bullying and improves school

climate. They have parent take-home letters, lessons, evaluation tools, research, success stories, and a program packet. The program led to 31 % decline in bullying and 70% cut in destructive bystander behavior.

15. Children listen to what you say and how you say it. They are watching how you move, your gestures, and all of the other subtleties of language. It is critical how you present yourself and how you respond to your child. Present a calm voice when you teach negotiation or handle a stressful event. Stay with your child and continue to support what they do, when they need the support.