

## Supporting children to develop friendships

**As children grow, they will naturally develop friendships, but they will need support in developing the skills necessary to sustain them. Friendship skills include sharing, taking turns, listening, cooperating and resolving disagreements. This week's top tip will provide you with strategies to teach children these skills.**



1. It is important to encourage children to listen to each other by showing an interest in what the other child is saying. Meal times are a great opportunity to foster conversations and nurture a child's social skills
2. Model listening and talking to each other. You may need to explicitly teach these skills if you observe a child struggling with this in their play or at meal times. Do this through short circle times, where every child has a chance to contribute or share their ideas with a partner
3. Sharing can be particularly challenging for young children. Have a timer for favoured toys, such as the bikes, to help children understand when it is their turn. Model phrases for them to use such as, "Can I have a turn?" or "Can we play this together?"
4. Plan times when you play a board game or parachute game with a small group to help the children develop cooperation and show them they can work enjoyably as part of a group. Winning and losing are also key skills which will help children retain friendships. Try losing a game to model how to lose graciously
5. There will inevitably be times when children get upset with each other or fall out. If they are hitting or hurting, you need to step in immediately. Take the children away from the situation and allow them as much time as they need to calm down. Support them through co-regulation, labelling their feelings and offering comfort. When they are calm remind them of the rules, such as having kind hands. Create an opportunity for them to talk together about what went wrong and enable them to repair the friendship, e.g. if they fell out about sharing a toy, you could sit together and show them how to play with it jointly
6. If children are struggling to play together give them different options. "Would you like to play in the sand or the water?" Praise the children when they decide on something together, e.g. "I love the way you worked this out together."

## NDNA products to support you with this activity

[Positive Behaviour in Early Years – LVC](#)

Find more resources at [www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna](http://www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna)