



Teaching Skills for Playing with Other Children

The complexity of interactions children need to exhibit while playing with peers varies tremendously depending on the activity. Some examples include collaboratively building a fort, playing a board game, playing video games, and competing in sports. Although different in scope, need for communication, and complexity of interactions, there are a number of core skills children need to work on to be successful in their play interactions. This article discusses those skills and strategies for developing them.

1. Listening and Responding – Whether passing the ball in soccer or discussing a video game, listening and appropriately responding to other people’s comments and requests is important. Children can be excited about an activity and forget to listen. Practice listening skills with role plays and discussions. Make role play cards with pictures of characters in a play situation or written scenarios. Have children act out the scene. Highlight the importance of listening and discuss how various responses may make the other child feel and how they contribute to the game or activity progressing in a positive way.

2. Taking Turns – Using board games is an effective and simple way to practice turn taking. Games range from simple activities with short waiting times between turns to more complex activities with multiple players and longer wait times. Board games provide a very controlled and systematic way for children to understand turn taking which can be applied to other play environments where children have to wait their turn.

3. Cooperating – Plan activities that require cooperation. For example, divide children into groups of 3-4 and have them make a collage about the group. Have the children work together to determine roles such as cutter, gluer, picture locator, writer, etc. Give the children a list of ideas for finding things that represent everyone in their group (sports, favorite foods, people they respect, etc.). The children can use the list as a guide for locating the images. Let the children present their project to the class and discuss how they worked together on the project including any difficulties they had as a team.



From: *Playing Together*

4. Compromising – Compromise requires an understanding of other people’s views and a willingness to come to an agreement with the other person. Discuss or role play scenarios involving compromise. A few examples are: One child wants to play one game and another wants to play a different game; Two children want the same seat on the bus; Siblings both want to hold the leash to walk the dog.

5. Being Fair – Giving other people the opportunity to contribute, following the rules, and treating other people well all fall under the umbrella of being fair. Role play situations related to following the rules, treating people equally, and using good judgment in different situations. Have children write stories about times they were treated fairly and times they were treated unfairly and how these situations made them feel.

To receive a **free customizable children’s book** on waiting, visit our website: