

Promoting Friendship Skills

| How friendship skills develop | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 3 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play side-by-side with peers engaged in similar activities• Begin to understand taking turns and responding to feelings of others |
| 4 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Friends” are regular playmates• Engage in cooperative play• Do not yet fully understand other perspectives and assume others think (and want to play) the same way they do• May need help introducing themselves or welcoming others to play |
| 5 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often share toys and ideas• Are curious about friends’ lives and share stories• May refer to a “best friend,” but this friend can change daily or weekly• Engage in more collaborative play |

Using peer pairing to promote friendship skills

Peer pairing is a technique for intentionally pairing children to maximize opportunities for learning and practicing friendship skills.

Steps for using peer pairing

Before play

- What skills do my students need to work on?
- How will the experience be positive for children?
- How will I best pair students?

During play

- Prompt children to plan play
- Provide matching stickers
- Provide extra support during play (e.g., modeling or prompting)
 - Join in and model
 - Make suggestions
 - Provide direct prompting

After play

- Reflect on time together
- Provide specific praise

Additional Resources for Supporting Friendship Skills in the Classroom

- *You’ve Got to Have Friends* handout (CSEFEL handout)
- *Guide to Supporting Friendship Skills* (VKRP handout)
- *Super Friends* social story and visual prompts
- “Book Nook” handout on *The Rainbow Fish*
- *Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning* website <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>