



Social Skills

Social Skills During Distance Learning

“We have got to work on keeping these children engaged with the world”

- Temple Grandin

Social skills include the ability to make and keep friends, be accepted by others, and maintain positive social relationships. Social skills can contribute to peer acceptance and a better school adjustment. They also allow an individual to tolerate the larger social situations with more ease. (Steedly, Schwartz, Levin, & Luke, 2008, p. 2).

These are the skills we use to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language and our personal appearance. Communication of our thoughts, feelings, and needs helps us to connect and build relationships with others.

Social skills include skills that many children pick up on by watching others around them. These skills can include the following: using appropriate personal space eye contact and nonverbal communication; as well as giving and receiving compliments, taking turns, identifying feelings, being flexible to change and participating in conversations.

These skills can be very challenging for many students. Many times, social skills are worked on in group settings where the skill can be



explicitly taught and then practiced with other students. During this unique situation we are in, there are many creative ways parents can continue working on social skills with their children at home.

If there are siblings at home, then students have built in peers to be able to practice these skills. However, if there are not other children in the home to practice with, there are activities and games listed below to help practice these skills in a fun way. These activities will help your child practice these skills in fun ways that won't necessarily feel like work.

Social Skills Practice at Home

There are many ways we can help children work on social skills at home with siblings or caregivers:

- ◆ Role Play giving and receiving compliments.
- ◆ Practicing starting and ending conversations, this can be done with conversation starters or by asking questions.
- ◆ The personal space circle: use a hula hoop or string to create a circle on the floor representing appropriate social distance (4ft) and practice having conversations without going into the other person's personal space.
- ◆ Practice identifying facial expressions and body language by displaying the emotion and asking the child to identify the feeling associated with it and then switch roles.
- ◆ Practice listening with attention by playing finish my story. The whole family can participate, one person starts the story and each person has to pay attention so they can add their section of the story when chosen
- ◆ Appropriate turn taking can be practiced with any game that you have in the house.
- ◆ Practice eye contact by playing the eye pointing game. Each person takes turns selecting an item around you with their eye and the other person has to guess what the item is.
- ◆ Practice nonverbal communication with a family game of charades.
- ◆ Use puppets or other toys to act out social situations and possible ways to react and or respond.

Additional Resources

- <https://www.bcps.org/system/coronavirus/>
- https://scs.bcps.org/departments/social_emotional_support
- <https://www.socialthinking.com/eLearning/categories/FreeWebinars>
- <https://www.handyhandouts.com/search.aspx?searchstr=Social+Skills>
- <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/family-life/parent-child/social-skills-grade-grade.html>

