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Developing Social Skills in Preschoolers

Day to day interaction and play will develop children's social skills naturally. Children will take time to learn the rules of interaction such as turn taking and eye contact, but there are activities (parents and caregivers) can incorporate into play time which will help children understand the rules.

Eye Contact

- Always try to get down to your child's eye level when speaking to them.
- Encourage your child to be in the same room and to face you when they are talking to you.
- Respond and wait for your child's response – don't rush communication – Children need more time to process the language and to formulate a response.
- Stop and take the time to listen and respond to your child.

Turn Taking

- Respond to your baby's noises/gestures and he will soon learn to make another noise/gesture for you
- Play lots of turn taking games with your child – Say "John's turn, mom's turn..."
- Ensure that every day interactions include turn taking opportunities with your child.
- Practice turn taking by playing games that require two or more people to take turns.

Games to help develop turn taking skills

- Building a tower – take turns in putting the blocks on a tower until it collapses.
- Blowing bubbles – take turns blowing bubbles.
- Dice and Board Games – great for older children as the games also have rules and structure.
- Sing Nursery Rhymes – leave off a word or two at the end that they have to fill in.

Listening Skills

- Encourage your child to pause and listen, and then when he/she hears a sound, acknowledge the sound.
- Turn off the television and spend some quality time with your child.
- Find activities that share your attention and that you and your child can enjoy and focus on together.

Simple game to play for developing listening and attention skills

- Ready, Steady, Go! – Have the child hold a toy and wait and listen for you to say "Ready....Steady..." then pause and let them wait for you to say "Go!" before releasing the toy.

Shared Attention

- Follow your baby's gaze and focus on the same thing – talk about what you both see. Eventually your baby will follow your gaze too.
- Go for a walk and point to, look at and talk about the things you see with your child.

Body Language and Using Gestures

- Try to use body language and gestures when you speak to your child so your child understands what you are saying, and it also teaches your child to do the same.
- Encourage the use of gestures especially if your child's speech is not clear in the early years.

Reference for this article: www.icommunicatetherapy.com Article: "Activities to Develop Early Social Skills"

If you are concerned about your child's speech and language development and/ or social or communication development, call the Language Express Preschool Speech System at 1-888-503-8885 / 613-283-2742. A speech-language assessment can identify your child's strengths and needs, and can help you prepare your child for success in communicating, reading and writing.

For more information, check out our website: www.language-express.ca

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Contact: Catherine Robinson, Clinical Coordinator, Language Express PSL, 613-283-2740 ext 4260