

Inclusive Developmental and Therapy Center

Making Friends: Social Skills at Home

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✓ Can I help my child at home?

Yes, you really can. Help your child take turns, share, join in play and build warm connections with other children. This free program breaks it down into simple weekly steps, built from proven therapy techniques — things any parent can do at home, in everyday moments, at no cost. It doesn't replace a professional assessment where one is needed, but for a lot of children it makes a real difference, and it never does any harm.

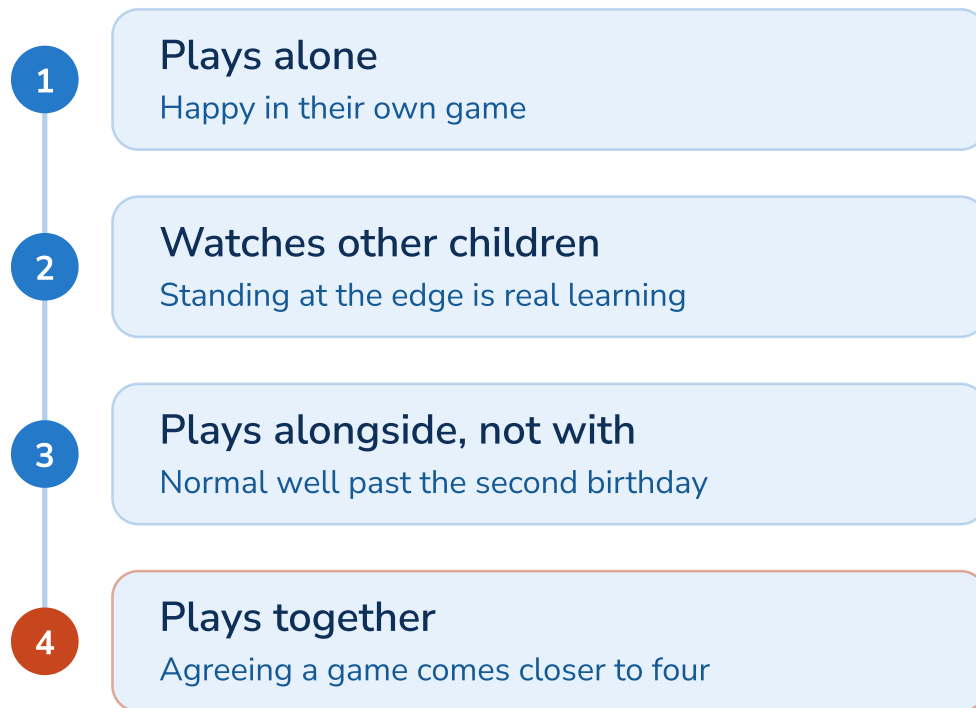
Go at your own pace — a new, gentle focus each week.

Download the whole program as a printable PDF to keep.

Includes the signs that mean it's worth getting a bit of extra help.

Yes, social skills can be taught at home — and for most young children, home is where they are learned first. If your child hovers at the edge of the group, plays beside other children instead of with them, or hands a toy back only when you insist, you are watching a skill that is still growing, not a flaw in your child. This free program turns that into gentle weekly steps you can start today, and it sits alongside our other free **home therapy programs for parents**.

It helps to know the order children learn in. First they play alone, then they watch other children, then they play happily alongside another child without really joining in — and that alongside stage is completely normal well past the second birthday. Playing with someone, agreeing on a game and giving up a toy without being asked usually come later, closer to four. **A lot of worried parents are watching a child who is exactly where they should be.**



Parents tell us this in their own words: mera bacha kisi se ghulta milta nahi, my child doesn't mix with anyone; bacha sharmeela hai, he is shy; school se shikayat aati hai ke kisi se baat nahi karta, the school says he doesn't speak to anyone. With cousins in and out of the house, a child who stays on the edge is noticed early here. These are warm, play-based ideas for ordinary days. They support your child, but they don't replace a proper assessment if something feels wrong. If it does, you can **book a session with our therapists in Multan** at any point along the way.

♥ **Who this program is for**

- ✓ Children who hover at the edge of the group, or can't find a way into play
- ✓ Children who play beside other children but not yet with them
- ✓ Little ones who snatch, or find sharing and waiting for a turn very hard
- ✓ Shy or unsure children who warm up slowly in new places
- ✓ Children whose school or nursery says they don't mix with the class
- ✓ Autistic children, and children being assessed, who want more shared moments alongside their autism therapy sessions
- ✓ Families who simply want playful, practical ways to build connection at home

Important – when to get professional help

This is a supportive home program — it isn't a diagnosis, and it doesn't replace a proper assessment. Please speak to a professional soon if:

Your child loses social skills they clearly had before — words, waving, pointing or eye contact

Little or no interest in other people at all, including one to one with familiar, loving adults — one of the early signs of autism worth asking about

Real distress or panic simply from being near other children, rather than shyness that eases with time

No pointing, showing or shared attention by the ages you would expect it

Your child doesn't respond to their name or to loud sounds — have their hearing checked before anything else

Social difficulties that are clearly getting worse rather than slowly easing

Getting help where you live

Everything here is free to use **anywhere in the world**. If you'd like a professional to take a closer look, the best next step is someone local to you:

Work with us online, from anywhere. We offer **online sessions and parent coaching** worldwide — book an online consultation and we'll guide you and your child directly.

Talk to your child's **doctor, paediatrician, GP or health visitor** — share what you noticed.

Ask about **free early-childhood or early-intervention services** in your area — many countries offer them for young children (e.g. Early Intervention in the US, NHS referrals in the UK).

Search **“child speech & language therapist near me”**, or ask your doctor for a referral.

Near Multan, Pakistan? You're also warmly welcome in person at our centre — **contact us here.**

☆ Your step-by-step roadmap

Move at your child's pace, not the calendar's — the “weeks” are just a gentle order, not a race. Feel free to repeat any stage for as long as it's helping.

Week 1 – Play together first

Build connection through one-to-one play with you.

Set aside short bursts of child-led play — ten minutes counts — where your child decides and you simply follow.

Get down face to face on the floor and copy what your child is doing, to spark a shared moment.

Comment more than you question. “You're building it tall” invites play; “What colour is that?” turns play into a test.

Keep it pressure-free — connection matters far more than playing the “right” way.

⚡ **Try** Join your child's play before you expect them to join anyone else's. If **this:** shared moments are the hard part, our connection and joint attention home program takes this first step much further.

Week 2 – Taking turns

Practise the back-and-forth that friendship is built on.

Play games with a short, obvious turn — rolling a ball, stacking one block each, posting shapes into a box.

Use the same clear words every time — “my turn... your turn” — so the rhythm becomes easy to feel.

Start with two turns each and build up slowly. Long turns are what make waiting hard.

Hand the toy back quickly at first, so waiting always pays off for your child.

 **Try** Turn-taking is the heartbeat of friendship, and a rolling ball teaches
this: it beautifully.

Week 3 – Show how it looks

Model the friendly moves instead of explaining them.

Model waving, saying hello and asking “Can I play?” in ordinary moments — then let it go, with no rehearsal and no pressure.

Use toys, puppets or a favourite cartoon to act out sharing, waiting and being left out.

Point out friendly behaviour as it happens — “Look, she gave him a turn.”

Name the feeling behind it too — “He looks happy that you waited.”

Children read faces long before they read words.

 **Try** Children copy what they see, so be the friendly behaviour you’re
this: hoping to grow.

Week 4 – Practise sharing

Make sharing feel safe rather than like a loss.

Play short sharing games where the toy comes straight back, so letting go never feels risky.

Offer a swap instead of an empty hand — a child who is given something finds it far easier to let something go.

Praise every attempt and say exactly what they did: “You gave Ali a turn.”

Put a few special toys away before anyone comes over. Expecting a child to share everything isn’t fair, and it isn’t what adults do either.

 **Try** Sharing feels much safer once your child learns the toy always
this: comes back.

Week 5 – Out into the world

Take the skills to one other child.

Set up one short, calm playdate with a single friend or cousin, at home, where your child feels safest.

Plan the first five minutes and choose the toys in advance — two of the popular ones, and nothing precious.

Stay close by to guide the turn-taking, and step in kindly before things boil over rather than after.

Finish while it’s still going well. A short, happy visit beats a long one that ends in tears.

 **Try** Practise at home, then take it out gently — one friend beats a crowd
this: every time.

Week 6 – When it doesn't go smoothly

Rehearse the hard bits: joining in, being told no, and losing.

Teach one simple way in and use the same words every time — walk over, watch for a moment, then ask “Can I play?”

Rehearse the “no”. Being turned down happens to every child; practise walking away calmly and either trying again later or finding someone else.

Play short games with a real winner and a real loser at home, where losing is safe, and let your child see you lose without any fuss.

Wait a few seconds before you rescue. Small squabbles that children sort out themselves are the lesson, not the problem.

 **Try** Rehearse the hard moment before it happens, never during it —
this: nobody learns a new skill while they're upset.

Little tricks that make it work

- ✓ Start with one calm playmate, not a busy, noisy group.
- ✓ Let your child watch. Standing at the edge watching other children is real social learning, not a wasted afternoon.
- ✓ Praise the trying, and say exactly what you liked rather than just “good boy”.
- ✓ Teach one short phrase at a time, and keep the words the same every time.
- ✓ Keep first playdates short, and finish while it's still going well.
- ✓ Never force sharing, hugs or apologies — a forced sorry teaches performance, not kindness.
- ✓ Use puppets, stories and pretend play to rehearse social moments before they happen.
- ✓ Be your child's teammate — stay close, and step in kindly when they need you.

How you'll know it's working

- Your child watches other children more, even if they aren't joining in yet.
- They take more turns in a game before drifting off.
- They let a toy go, or accept a swap, with less of a fight.
- They move a little closer to other children — beside them first, then in with them.
- They use one of the phrases you've practised, in their own way, without you prompting.
- Playing with others feels a bit easier, and a bit happier, for your child.



Is this based on real methods? This program follows the order children naturally learn in — playing alone, watching others, playing alongside, then playing together — and uses widely recommended play-based social learning: following your child's lead, modelling friendly behaviour, turn-taking games, rehearsing social moments in play, and practising at home before helping your child carry the skill over to other children and settings. The same principles sit behind parent-coaching approaches such as the Hanen approach, and behind the social-skills teaching speech and language therapists and behavioural support staff use every day.



Educational information, not a diagnosis. Our guidance follows standard, research-based practice (CDC, NHS, ASHA and WHO), is written by our therapy team and **medically reviewed by a GMC-registered doctor**. Every child is different, so we can't promise specific results — always use your own judgement and speak to a qualified professional about your child. **Read our full disclaimer.**

FAQ

Making Friends: questions parents ask

