

Developing Social Skills



Overview

This tool was developed by NCSE Speech and Language Therapists. It has been adapted to be used by teachers working with children with additional needs as part of Summer Provision. This document provides the steps and sample activities that can be used by teachers to develop a student's social skills. The skills you choose to work on may depend on the developmental stage, language skills and current priority learning needs of the student(s) you are working with.

This resource supports the key principles of 'Promoting a Sense of Self-efficacy and Community-Efficacy' and 'Promoting Connectedness'.

What are Social Skills?

Social skills is the term that refers to an individual's ability to interact with other people. Many different skills fall under the umbrella of social skills, including:

- Understanding social rules
- Understanding and using correct body language
- Using appropriate language
- Using empathy to understand the world from someone else's point of view
- Understanding and using appropriate tone of voice and volume when communicating



Many children with speech, language and communication needs have difficulty with social interaction. Social interaction skills are important in both social situations and in school and continue to develop in response to the shifting demands in all areas of a child's life.

Teachers have opportunities to help improve a child's social interaction success.

You can discuss with a student why we need social skills and explain how adults use social skills every day at work, on the phone, when shopping and when talking with their friends. The student may have some more examples to share with you.

Here are examples of general social skills that teachers can practice with students:

- ✓ **Taking turns**
- ✓ **Using eye contact**
- ✓ **Understanding and using facial expression**
- ✓ **Using people's names**
- ✓ **Helping others**
- ✓ **Celebrating winning and accepting losing games**
- ✓ **Sharing**
- ✓ **Asking for help**
- ✓ **Using appropriate tone and volume of voice**
- ✓ **Resolving conflicts**
- ✓ **Active listening**
- ✓ **Staying on topic**
- ✓ **Sharing ideas**
- ✓ **Waiting patiently**



As a student develops their social skills, they may need support to build more complex interaction skills such as:

- ✓ **Building and maintaining relationships with family, friends and others**
- ✓ **Joining in conversations**
- ✓ **Working in a team**
- ✓ **Developing thinking and learning**
- ✓ **Understanding and managing emotions**
- ✓ **Solving problems and resolving conflict**
- ✓ **Success in the workplace**



How Teachers can Work on Social Skills:

1. Work on One Skill at a Time
2. Teach the Skill
3. Practice the Skill
4. Give the Student Feedback

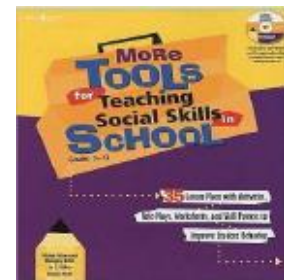
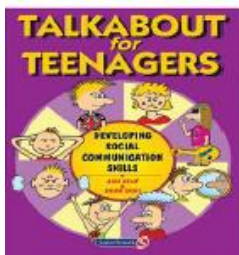
1. Work on One Social Skill at a Time:

When working with a student on social skills, focus on just one skill at a time. You may want to select one skill to focus on each week. You could create a chart to list the skill for that week.

2. Teach the skill:

For example, you may want to teach a student about the rules of taking turns in conversations. You can discuss that it is important to look at the person who is talking to you, don't speak when they are speaking, don't change the subject, use verbal fillers e.g. "ah hah", "umm", "ok", to show you are interested and only interrupt when really necessary. You could ask the student for their ideas on what is important in a conversation. You can make a list of the "rules" that you and the student have come up with and could even draw a picture to represent each one.

You can do something similar for other social skills that you teach a student. You can find activity ideas in the 'useful links box' below. Your school may also have useful resources for teaching social skills. The 'Talkabout' series of books and 'Tools for Teaching Social Skills in Schools' are examples of resources with activities that you can adapt for students that you are working with.



3. Practice the skill:

Ask the student to practice using the skill with everyone that is available. He/she could practice saying it to other students, their parents, siblings or even on online conversations with friends or family!

You could also use role play to act out a scenario with a student in which he/she could use the skill in a 'pretend' social situation. You could pretend to be a shopkeeper or another child, and ask the child to practice using the social skill. If there are other students in the class, get them involved in practicing and pretending. This will help them to practice the skill to use in 'real life'. See role play section of this document for ideas for practicing a social skill.

You can find further ideas for practising social skills here:

- <https://www.royalwolverhampton.nhs.uk/services/service-directory-a-z/speech-and-language-therapy-children/activities-and-advice/social-communication-skills/>
- <https://www.parentingscience.com/social-skills-activities.html>
(activities for younger children)

4. Give feedback:

At the end of each day, take the time to give the student feedback on their use of social skills that day. Help the student celebrate his/her social skills successes—if you make it a big deal, the student will too.

Be specific when giving the student praise. Children often dismiss general praise such as "great job!" but praise that is linked to specific behaviour is more meaningful and is more likely to be believed.

- First, comment on the behaviour e.g. "you waited your turn", "you spoke with a quiet voice", "you shared with your sister".
- Then, give it a name e.g. "that was very thoughtful/ kind/ friendly/ patient/ helpful".

Role Play Ideas

The Birthday Party

Pretend the student is attending a friend's birthday party.

Practice what to do when they first enter the house, when they are playing games and waiting for the birthday girl to open her presents.

Reverse the roles and let the student be the birthday girl/boy to choose the games and open the presents.

The Supermarket

Pretend the student is picking some items from the shelves, give them a few items to remember.

Pick a scenario where they have to ask for help from a shopkeeper.

Practice queuing at the till, unloading the basket and filling the shopping bags.

Reminding them to ask for a receipt and use the club card.

The Restaurant

Pretend the student is working in a restaurant and has to listen carefully take your food and drinks order.

Practice asking questions for example, would you like more drinks? Is there anything else I can get for you?

Reverse the roles and now practice being a customer at a restaurant.

School

Pretend the student is the teacher and she is teaching her class something new. Pretend that the students are noisy and how does the teacher get the children's attention?

Reverse the roles and practice being the student in the class, practice asking questions, waiting for your turn, good listening skills.

Useful websites with information and social skill activities:

- Royal Wolverhampton Trust UK:
<https://www.royalwolverhampton.nhs.uk/services/service-directory-a-z/speech-and-language-therapy-children/activities-and-advice/social-communication-skills/>
- Worcestershire NHS Trust: <https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/childrens-speech-and-language-resources/>
- Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust:
<https://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-a-z/speech-and-language-therapy2/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit/>
- <https://www.parentingscience.com/social-skills-activities.html> (activities for younger children)
- <https://www.afasic.org.uk/download/779/> (ideas for secondary school age young people)