

Milwaukee County

Birth to 3

Program



Tips For Fostering Early Friendships

Everyone needs friendship. Making friends is a skill that needs to be learned. The earlier your toddler develops this skill, the more experience he or she will have making friends later in life.

Here are some tips you can use to teach your toddler how to make friends.

Talk about friendship.

Help your child make the connection between their kind behavior and friendship. Encouraging your child to share, take turns and listening to the ideas of others will help them learn how to be a good friend.

Schedule playdates.

Playdates are fun, and they help your toddler practice the friendship skills they are learning. Remember to balance the need for supervision with letting your child and their friends figure out how to play together.

Respect your child's temperament.

Some children are naturally more introverted and prefer smaller groups and one-to-one playdates. If your child is more introverted, help them learn ways they can connect with others in a larger group. Other children are extroverted, and might need reminders to listen to other children's ideas.

Teach your child how to problem-solve.

When conflict arises, encourage your child and their friends to share ideas of how to solve the problem. Everyone gets the chance to brainstorm ideas. Then pick the idea that everyone agrees on, and decide logistics (who goes first, taking turns).

Encourage social play.

Games such as pretending you are at a restaurant, playing house, or pretending you are shopping in a grocery store can help your child learn how to respond to social situations. As your toddler and their friends play, they can practice taking turns and playing different roles. Using these skills, they can work on communication, problem-solving, and empathy.

By teaching your child the building blocks of friendship, you will be setting them up for a life of relationship with others. Learning to make friends can provide your toddler with supportive, deep friendships throughout their lifetime.