



Parenting the Preschooler

Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

How do you teach your child to be a good friend?

Ages & Stages

PRECHOOLER A child who is 3 to 5 years of age.

YOUNG CHILD A child who is 0 to 8 years of age.

Minding Our Language

Families come in all shapes, sizes, and styles. A “family” may include people who are related by blood, by marriage, and by choice. “Parents” may be biological, step-, foster, adoptive, legally appointed, or something else. When we use the words “family” and “parent” in these materials, we do so inclusively and with great respect for all adults who care for and work with young people.

Friendships are an important part of the preschool years. Having friends helps children learn how to share, take turns, cooperate, be patient, solve problems, and develop other skills they need to get along with others. To preschoolers, a friend means someone they like to play with. Although they have fun together, there can be a lot of crying and fighting, too.

Young children are just beginning to learn how to make and keep friends, and many of them are not very good at it yet. Try some of the following ideas to help your child be the kind of friend other children want to have:

- Play with your child. They will learn by watching you, so treat them the way you want them to treat others.
- Know your preschooler’s friends and what they do together.
- Practice taking turns and sharing at home so they know what to do when playing with friends.
- Ask your child to imagine how other people feel in different situations so they begin to think about the feelings of others. (“*I wonder . . .*” “*How would you feel if . . .*”)
- Teach your child what sad, happy, mad, and glad faces look like so they will notice and learn to identify their friends’ feelings.
- Involve your child when you need to solve problems so they learn how they can solve problems with their friends.
- Let your child work out disagreements with friends when possible. Arguing is normal in preschooler friendships.
- Stop mean and aggressive behavior. Help your child learn positive ways of solving problems.

Find Out More

MSU Extension provides the following resources for parents and caregivers of preschoolers and young children at no or low cost. Be sure to check out these and other MSU Extension resources available at www.extension.msu.edu.

Extension Extras (<https://bit.ly/2LC2vdX>) – These compilations of news articles, activities, parenting tips and advice are published online Monday through Friday. The resources are designed for parents and caregivers of young children who are home all day during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Each day has a theme: Mindful Mondays, Tips on Tuesday, Working Wednesdays, Thinking Thursday, and Fun Fridays.

Extension Extras Enrichment Kits (<https://bit.ly/35QAplQ>) – These kits feature five or six early childhood activities with learning goals focused in areas such as social and emotional health, literacy, and STEM; a supply list; suggested children's books; introduction letters explaining how to use the materials; and an evaluation. The kits are available as free downloads.

Early Childhood Videos (<https://bit.ly/3ioyEkS>) – These short videos offer parents and caregivers of young children information on parenting topics. Titles include "Perspective Taking," "Family Movies," "Goals of Misbehavior," "Using Thinking and Feeling Words," "The Waiting Game," and "When Siblings Fight."

Building Early Emotional Skills (BEES) in Young Children (<https://bit.ly/38XW4Kl>) – This page provides links to a variety of free online parenting courses, workshops, and events offered by MSU Extension for parents and caregivers of young children aged 0 to 3.

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