

Strategies for supporting the development of friendship skills in infants and toddlers

Examine the physical environment to ensure that there is enough space for infants, toddlers, and adults to engage in social activities. Examples: comfy areas on the floor, rockers/gliders.

Evaluate the physical environment for spaces for two or more children to enjoy side by side activity and for adults to be seated close by for supervision. Examples: lofts, rocking boats, block areas, climbing boxes or play houses.

Evaluate the daily schedule for multiple opportunities to develop play skills each day. Examples: indoor and outdoor play times.

Provide enough materials and equipment that allow and encourage two or more children to interact. Examples: large mirrors, stacking toys, cars, dolls, puzzles, or other manipulative materials.

Encourage toddlers to help each other and do routines together. Examples: hand washing, brushing teeth, cleaning up toys.

Provide positive guidance and verbal support for playing together and helping each other. Examples: "Maria and Tasha, you are doing such a good job rolling out the play dough together." "Tasha, please hand Maria her spoon." "Gabriel, will you take this book to Benji?"

Read books about friends, playing together, helping each other, etc.

Practice turn taking and sharing. Play turn taking games.

Imitate what a child is doing. For example, sit next to the child and stack blocks.

Describe one child's activity to another out loud, drawing the children to notice each other. For example, "Charles is lining the blocks up on the carpet. You are stacking the blocks up high."