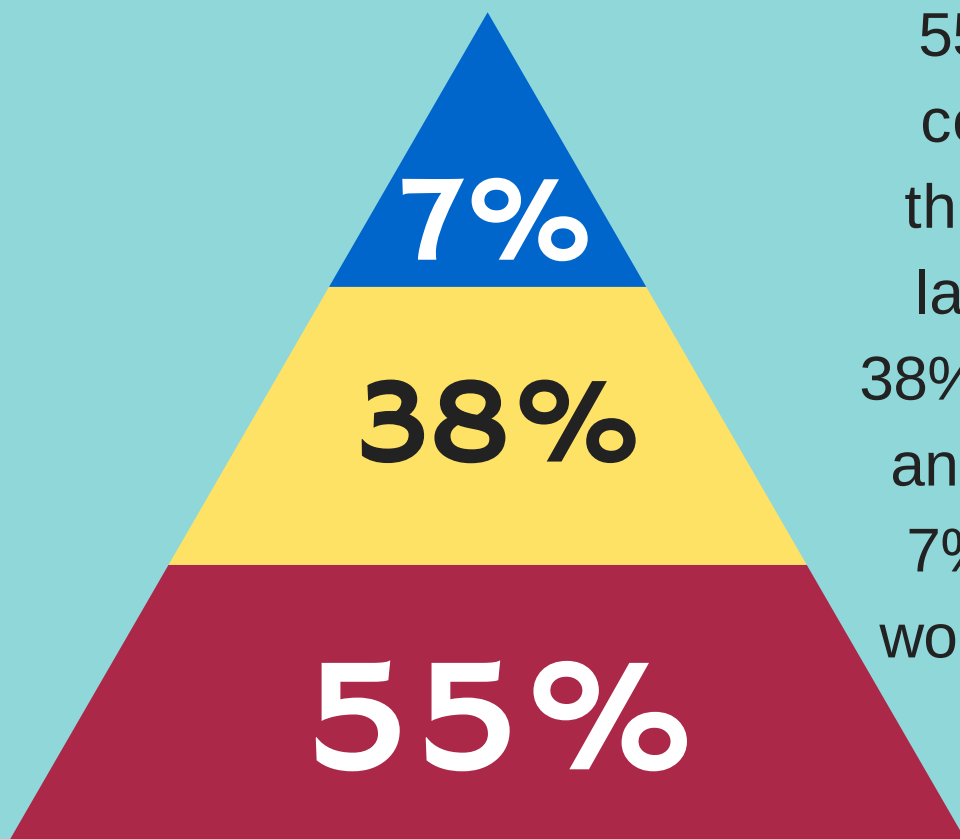


Social Skills & Play

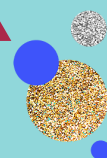
Social skills are incredibly important for the development of a child's ability to have effective interactions throughout their life. This is an area, which is shared with a variety of other professions including Occupational Therapists and Psychologists.

Children typically develop their social skills by observation of others and regular interactions with others of a variety of ages. Social skills enable a child to not only know what to do with their body, voice and language in a variety of environments, but also to read and interpret the communication of others around them.

If you have concerns about your child's social skills, consult your family doctor, paediatrician or child health nurse to determine which profession will be the best approach for your child. See below for typical social skill and play skill development.



55% of what we communicate is through our body language, whilst 38% is via our voice and tone, and just 7% by the actual words that we say.



Social Skills & Play

0-6 months

Shows some facial expression in response to mother's voice or face.

Establishes eye contact with mother (initially only for a few seconds)

Smile develops from a social smile, to a selective social smile.

Smiles and makes content noises to show enjoyment and respond to faces and voices.

Engages in interactional sequences – gazes at an adult's face and respond with vocalisation, movement and eye contact.

Begin to change their gaze patterns depending on the other person's gaze.

Gets excited when sees people, and looks in direction of person leaving room

Visually discriminates different people and things.

Smiles and vocalises to image in mirror

Anticipates being lifted, laughs when played with

Imitates some movements of others

Displays anger when objects taken away, reaches for objects

Plays with rattle, and bangs objects in play

Social Skills & Play

6-12 months



Prefers people games such as peekaboo.

Eventually learns to cover own face during game.

Teases (beginning of humour) and laughs at funny facial expressions

Raises arms to be picked up

Acts positively towards peers, studies other babies

Is clearly attached to mother, and may reject being alone

Shouts for attention

Plays action games and songs

Helps dress and feed self

Becomes aware of social approval and disapproval and begins to seek

approval e.g. clapping, waving

Anticipates mother's goal and tries to change it by protest or 'persuasion'

Expresses preferences for certain people

Expresses many different emotions

Searches for hidden objects

Imitates actions e.g. stirring with a spoon

Manipulates and explores most toys

Some appropriate use of toys i.e. pushing toy car

Offers toys to others by extending hand

Spontaneously placing a doll with head upright and vertical to the ground.

Social Skills & Play

1-2 years

Says 'hi', 'bye' or 'please'.

Imitates patting a doll

Functional use of objects and purposeful exploration of toys

Hands adult toy if they can't get it to work

Plays ball with adults

Places one object inside another object (nesting)

Stacks and assembles toys.

Enjoys stacking blocks and knocking them down.

Functional play with self e.g. pretends to feed themselves/teddy with a spoon

Uses tools e.g. uses string or a stick to get a toy.

Spontaneously looks for hidden objects

Imitates housework activities

Dances to music

Pretends to play an instrument

Pretend play on others e.g. feeds a doll with a bottle

Combines two toys in pretend play e.g. puts a spoon in a bowl

Attempts to act out daily experiences – only for very short periods at first.

Begins to express a range of communicative intentions, first by gesture combined with vocalisation and then by words:

- attention-seeking;
- requesting objects, action or information;
- rejecting or protesting;
 - greeting;
 - naming.

Responds to speech with speech: can have short conversations of two-three turns per person.

Comes to realise that such phrases as 'In a minute' means 'wait'

Interactions initiated non-verbally by child, for example, by giving, pointing, showing or making requesting gestures and vocalisations.

Social Skills & Play

2-3 years

Verbalises their desires/feelings (e.g. 'I want a drink').

Treats dolls or teddies as if they are alive.

Plays beside other children (Parallel Play)

Uses symbols in play such as a stick becoming a sword (emerging Symbolic Play)

Engages in play themes which reflect less frequently experienced life events (e.g. visiting the doctor).

Enjoys repetitive play

Comments to express feelings and assert independence

Begins to use language imaginatively.

Initiates interactions by using a word (for example, 'Mummy!').

Asks for clarification when they don't understand (What?)

Social Skills & Play

3-4 years

Enjoys playing with mechanical toys.

Begins taking turns with other children and playing with 2 or 3 children in a group.

Engages in play themes which expand beyond personal experience (e.g. fireman rescuing people). (Role Play)

Talks about their feelings.

Feels shame when caught doing the wrong thing.

Uses language to talk about past and future events; gives more information and begins to retell simple stories.

Notices when adults change the wording of familiar stories and rhymes.

Becomes more able to communicate with strangers.

With peers, talk may alternate between private talk to self and talk to partner.

Can participate in pretend conversations and switch roles in play.

Will respond to things overheard in other people's conversations.

Rapid change of conversational topics.

When child is not understood, tends to repeat without modification

Social Skills & Play

4-6 years

Theory of mind emerges (this is ability to think outside of one's self and experience) - to consider that others have different thoughts, feelings, and knowledge than they do.

Plays with other children with shared aims within play.

Plays imaginatively for instance playing in the home-corner, dressing up and cooking.

Engages in games with simple rules (e.g. hide and seek).

They like to challenge themselves, intellectually, with puzzles and games that test their growing knowledge or involve strategy (checkers, card games), and physically, with pick-up sticks, jacks, roller skates, pogo sticks, and ball games.

Engages in play which includes themes never personally experienced (e.g. in space).

Negotiates during play and engages in well-organised play.

Uses language to:

- gain and hold adults' attention, for example 'know what?';
 - give information;
 - seek information from other people;
 - give instructions to peers;
 - state rules;
 - negotiate and bargain;
 - express a range of feelings/emotions;
 - state beliefs and opinions;
 - taunt and threaten.

Social Skills & Play

4-6 years **continued**

Begins to tell jokes (punchline often misses the point). Enjoys jokes but doesn't fully understand play on words/puns.

Takes instructions from peers and responds to their questions.

Becomes able to treat language as an object of analysis and to use language to talk about language (metalinguistic awareness).

Listens to extended stories from books and can read simple ones.

Becomes more efficient at initiating and holding longer conversations

Learns to choose most appropriate timing for attempts to join in other people's conversations.

When telling something, has difficulties in taking into account what the listener knows and needs to know in order to understand, for example, assumes knowledge of the context or participants is shared.

Gradually learns to adapt conversational style to a variety of conversational partners who differ in age, sex, status and familiarity.

Shows some awareness of social conventions for language use, for example, modifies request forms to make them more polite and makes judgments about degrees of politeness in others' requests.

Social Skills & Play

6-9 years



Plays with small groups and making up their own games with rules.

Plays co-operative games but not usually coping with losing.

Enjoys play with other children of their own sex.

Increased ability to pay attention and inhibit impulses

Play becomes sophisticated and increasingly symbolic as planning and problem solving skills increase and emotional regulation improves.

A preference for group play e.g. organised sports.

Individual interests begin to take priority and their tastes and skills become quite well defined

Begins use of sarcasm and irony.

Can understand jokes based on play on words.

More sophisticated functions of language become established:

- promising
- hypothesising
- describing own and others' feelings and reactions.

Social Skills & Play

6-9 years **continued**

Uses language to develop ideas:

- planning, predicting and hypothesising;
 - reasoning and evaluation;
 - explanation;
- expressing abstract ideas and opinions;
 - argument and debate.

Skills in negotiation and persuasion develop further.

Develops use of non-literal language, for example, idiom, simile, metaphor.

Can read and extract information from books.

Gets better at setting the scene to take account of listeners' needs.

Topics of conversation extend into abstract ideas.

Can assess the adequacy of a communication and comment on where it has gone wrong.

Adapts style of speech to age, status and other variables related to listener.

More proficient at using politeness as a strategy in communicating.

Develops appreciation and use of social conventions relating to facial expression, gesture, posture, distance, eye contact.