

Top 5 Social Skills That Are Important For Kindergarteners

Social emotional development is ongoing throughout childhood and adolescence. Skills that are important for kindergarten remain just as important during the rest of your child's school career and adult life, but at this age and stage these skills begin to take root. Many of these social emotional milestones will make your child's transition to kindergarten much easier.

1. Skill: *Understands the difference between right and wrong and recognizes and respects authority figures.*

Why It's Important: For many children, until they begin kindergarten the only authority figures to whom they are truly accountable are Mom and Dad (or other caregivers). That changes once school starts. All of sudden there are many rules, many people enforcing those rules and significant consequences for breaking the rules. An understanding of right and wrong helps students understand that the rules help the classroom community to run smoothly.

2. Skill: *Can communicate needs and feelings verbally in a socially appropriate manner and understands/recognizes that other people have feelings.*

Why It's Important: Though it may seem as though kindergarten is quickly becoming more and more academic, one of its most important functions is to teach children how to socially interact with others.

Children who continue to express anger and frustration by hitting, yelling and throwing objects will not only have a difficult time making their needs understood, but may socially isolate themselves as well. Knowing that there are more productive ways to express themselves and that what they say and do affects other people plays a key role in making friends and being a part of the learning community.

3. Skill: *Can play independently or in a small group without needing to be constantly supervised.*

Why It's Important: With twenty-some children in a classroom, all of whom learn in different ways and at different rates, it's not possible for a kindergarten teacher to supervise every individual child all at the same time.

As kindergarten progresses, group and independent work time is increased and children need to be able to work on their own without constant redirection. Not only does this prepare a child for future schooling, but it also helps to build a sense of accomplishment and an understanding that he is an individual capable of doing things all by himself.

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4. Skill: *Is beginning to take turns, share, converse and play with other children without needing to be reminded and uses polite language.*

Why It's Important: Just as a kindergarten teacher can't supervise all students individually, she rarely can afford to provide one of everything for each student. Your child will be learning to share materials, manipulatives, toys and attention this year. He'll need to be able to do so gracefully, without being bossy or rude.

Just remember though, mastering this skill is an ongoing process and five-year-olds are just learning it. It may take some time before he's consistently able to share and be polite.

5. Skill: *Likes to make decisions for himself, explores new things and take some (safe) risks.*

Why It's Important: One of the most common problems that arises as the new school year begins is separation anxiety, or difficulty stepping into a new environment while leaving caregivers behind. This anxiety is less prominent in children who enjoy a challenge and are willing to take a few risks. Additionally, children who are curious about exploring new things are ripe learners, eager to see what each new activity and lesson holds.



From: <http://childparenting.about.com/od/schoollearning/a/important-social-skills-kindergarten.htm>