

Social Communication & Interaction Support

Parent Advice Sheet – Age 5–6

What Are Social Communication & Interaction Difficulties?

Children with these challenges may:

- Struggle to start or maintain conversations
- Find it hard to understand social rules (e.g., turn-taking, personal space)
- Miss non-verbal cues like facial expressions or tone of voice
- Prefer playing alone or have difficulty joining group play

At age 5–6, children are learning to:

- Use language to share ideas, ask questions, and solve problems
- Take turns in conversation and play
- Understand others' feelings and perspectives
- Build friendships through shared interests
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Social communication and interaction skills are absolutely essential in a classroom. They form the bedrock of how children learn, connect, and thrive in group settings. At this age, children are just beginning to navigate relationships beyond their family, and the classroom becomes a training ground for lifelong social development.

Why These Skills Matter So Much

- **Building Friendships:** Children learn how to initiate play, take turns, share toys, and resolve conflicts — all of which help them form meaningful relationships.
- **Developing Empathy:** Even though children are still learning to understand others' perspectives, they begin to recognize emotions and respond with kindness, which fosters a caring classroom environment.

- **Effective Communication:** children start using language not just to express needs but to ask questions, comment, and engage in imaginative play. This helps them participate in group activities and classroom discussions.
- **Boosting Confidence:** Strong social skills help children feel more secure and less dependent on adults. They become more willing to try new things and take part in collaborative learning.
- **Academic Success:** Studies show that social skills are better predictors of school performance than IQ at this age. Children who can cooperate and communicate are more likely to succeed in learning tasks.

In the Classroom

- Teachers often use role play, storytelling, and games to teach these skills. Activities like building together, playing pretend, or taking turns in conversation help children practice cooperation, listening, and emotional regulation

How You Can Help at Home

1. Model Social Language

- Use phrases like “Can I play too?” or “Let’s take turns”
- Narrate your own social interactions: “I’m asking Grandma how she feels today”

2. Practice Turn-Taking

- Use games and conversation to take turns speaking and listening
- Praise your child for waiting and responding: “Great job waiting for your turn!”

3. Teach Emotion Words

- Label feelings during daily routines: “You look frustrated—can you tell me why?”
- Use books and pictures to explore emotions

4. Use Visual Supports

- Create cue cards for greetings, asking for help, or joining play
- Use social stories to explain common situations (e.g., sharing toys)

5. Encourage Peer Interaction

- Arrange short, supported playdates with familiar children
- Guide your child in joining play: “Let’s ask if we can build together”

Fun Activities to Build Social Skills

Activity	What to Do	Skills Practiced
Role Play	Act out social scenarios with toys or puppets	Conversation, problem-solving
Board Games	Play simple games that require turn-taking	Patience, cooperation
Story Talk	Read books and discuss characters’ feelings/actions	Perspective-taking
Emotion Faces	Make faces and guess the emotion	Non-verbal cues, empathy
“What Would You Say?”	Practice responses to common situations	Social language, confidence
Friendship Hunt	Spot kind behaviours in others during outings	Observation, positive interaction

Conversation Starters

- “What would you say if someone wanted to play with you?”
- “How do you know if someone is happy or sad?”
- “Can you tell me something kind you did today?”

Quick Tips

- Keep practice short, playful, and consistent
- Use praise and encouragement for social efforts
- Be patient—skills grow with time and support