

Group Settings for Teaching Social Skills

Social skills are the ways we learn to navigate the rules, customs, and guide our interactions with other people and the world around us. They allow individuals to make friends and participate in their community. Many people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and intellectual disabilities need help in learning how to act in different types of social situations. They often have the desire to interact with others, but may not know how to begin these interactions, and may feel overwhelmed by social situations.

Here are some examples of Social Skills that persons with ASD and intellectual disabilities may need support with:

Beginner Skills

- ✦ Requesting items from peers
- ✦ Reciprocating greetings with peers
- ✦ Taking turns with toys and simple games
- ✦ Tolerating toys being shared
- ✦ Eye contact and appropriate body language

Advanced Skills

- ✦ Initiating play or joining play with peers
- ✦ Initiating conversations
- ✦ Maintaining conversations
- ✦ Staying on topic during conversation
- ✦ Leaving conversations appropriately
- ✦ Creating and maintaining friendships

Social Skills Groups

Social skills can be taught in a group setting called a social skills group. These groups are typically small and are made up of peers around the same age. They are led by a facilitator that guides learning and encourages practicing skills together. There may be a general curriculum that is presented to the entire group during the session. Social skills groups can also be individualized where each participant works on their own goal alongside their peers, based on their skills and challenges.



Keep In Mind

- ✦ Certain pre-requisite skills may promote success in a social skills group, such as:
 - ✦ Attending to activities in a group setting
 - ✦ Following group instructions
 - ✦ Imitate what others are showing
 - ✦ Motivation to learn and interact with others
- ✦ Social skills groups will be most beneficial when the participants are matched in age and learning level

Provides an opportunity to practice social skills with similar aged peers

Can be individualized to target specific goals and abilities

Benefits of Social Skills Groups

Provides the opportunity to learn and practice social skills in a structured setting that mimics the natural environment

Allows for social skills to be taught using instruction, practice, and immediate feedback