Social Knowledge & Competence

What is it? Social knowledge and competence is cooperation and the ability to get along with others and make friends. It is also taking responsibility and showing respect, as well as the ability to solve problems and adjust to routines. Socially competent children have positive work habits and are eager to explore new things, such as books, toys and games.

Why is it important? Children who get along well with others, and who can adjust to new situations, are children who are prepared to learn and succeed—at school and throughout life.

Teach your child acceptable behaviour in public places

- Visit a variety of places with your child (e.g., grocery store, drop-in centre, doctor's office). Before you visit these places, give your child very clear and specific expectations (e.g., "walking feet only, and remember to say please and thank you").
- Plan ahead of time for long outings. For example, bring small toys or colouring activities to restaurants, the doctor's office, or any place your child must wait for a long time.
- Speak to your child, and others, respectfully. Children imitate what they hear.

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Encourage your child to control his or her behaviour

- When a problem arises between your child and a playmate, try not to give a solution right away. Give the children an opportunity to come up with their own ideas on how to solve the problem. But stay nearby and coach when it is needed.
- Be consistent—have a schedule and household rules that are enforced the same way every time.

Help your child learn appropriate respect for adult authority

- Build a strong relationship, based on trust and respect, with your child. Follow through on your promises and your child will feel that she or he can rely on you.
- Talk to your child about being respectful to family members and other people, and then show her or him how it's done by modelling respect to those around you.

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Teach your child how to cooperate and follow rules

- Talk to your child about sharing and taking turns, then set up an activity where you and your child can take turns.
- Play with a large ball. Take turns rolling it to each other. After awhile, include a stuffed toy in the game, just as you would include another child.
- Set up short playdates for your child with one of his or her friends. Plan for games and activities that are short, simple and cooperative (not competitive).

Right from the beginning, encourage your baby to develop good social skills

- Lie down on the floor next to your baby and talk, read a book, or sing.
- Give your baby a chance to be with other babies. For example, participate in a baby play group like "Mother Goose" at your local Ontario Early Years Centre.
- Play "Hide, Find and Hug": It's just like hide-and-seek within a very small area, but with a hug as the reward for finding the "hider."

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Encourage your child to play and work with other children

- Provide lots of opportunity for your child and his or her friends to play and work together.
- Give the children a common goal to work on. For example, they can bake cookies together, first by taking turns pouring and measuring the ingredients, then by stirring the batter.

Imagination is a great tool for teaching social skills

- Play a game of make believe with your child. For example, start by saying: "You be the parent and I'll be the child."
- Play the "What would you do?" game: Make up different social situations and ask your child what she or he would do. For example, "What would you do if a friend came to your birthday party with socks on her ears?"

For more information, visit

www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca

www.actagainstviolence.apa.org/discipline/athome.html