

*Helping
you to help
your child*

Helping Your Child to Make New Friends

Simple, actionable ideas for parents, carers
and other supporting adults



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Introduction

Learning to make friends is an important skill that can be easily overlooked. Some children find it easier than others, but all children can benefit from a little input about how to break the ice and build relationships with their peers.

In this guide, I've shared some simple ideas to help you role model and talk to your child about making friends. These ideas will be especially helpful if your child is starting a new school or attending a new activity.

Cherry-pick the ideas that you think might work for you and give them a go. You can always revisit others later if you need to.

Good luck!

Pooky x

Show Them How

Be a friend-making role model to your child. This might mean stepping out of your comfort zone if you're quite reserved, but if we're expecting this behaviour of our kids, maybe we need to be prepared to give it a go ourselves.

You can role model starting conversations with people in daily life such as checkout staff, or you can show how to have conversations that show an interest in others when talking to acquaintances such as neighbours.

Children are great at copying the behaviour they see, so show them how to make friends and talk through what you're doing and why so they understand.



-2-

Explore What Makes a Good Friend

Talk to your child about what they're looking for in a friend. This can help them to better understand both how to BE a good friend and how to FIND a good friend.

What your child looks for in a friend and what you'd look for might be different, so try to help your child lead the conversation. You might be surprised with what they come up with. Here are some examples from other children:

a good listener

kind

likes animals

funny

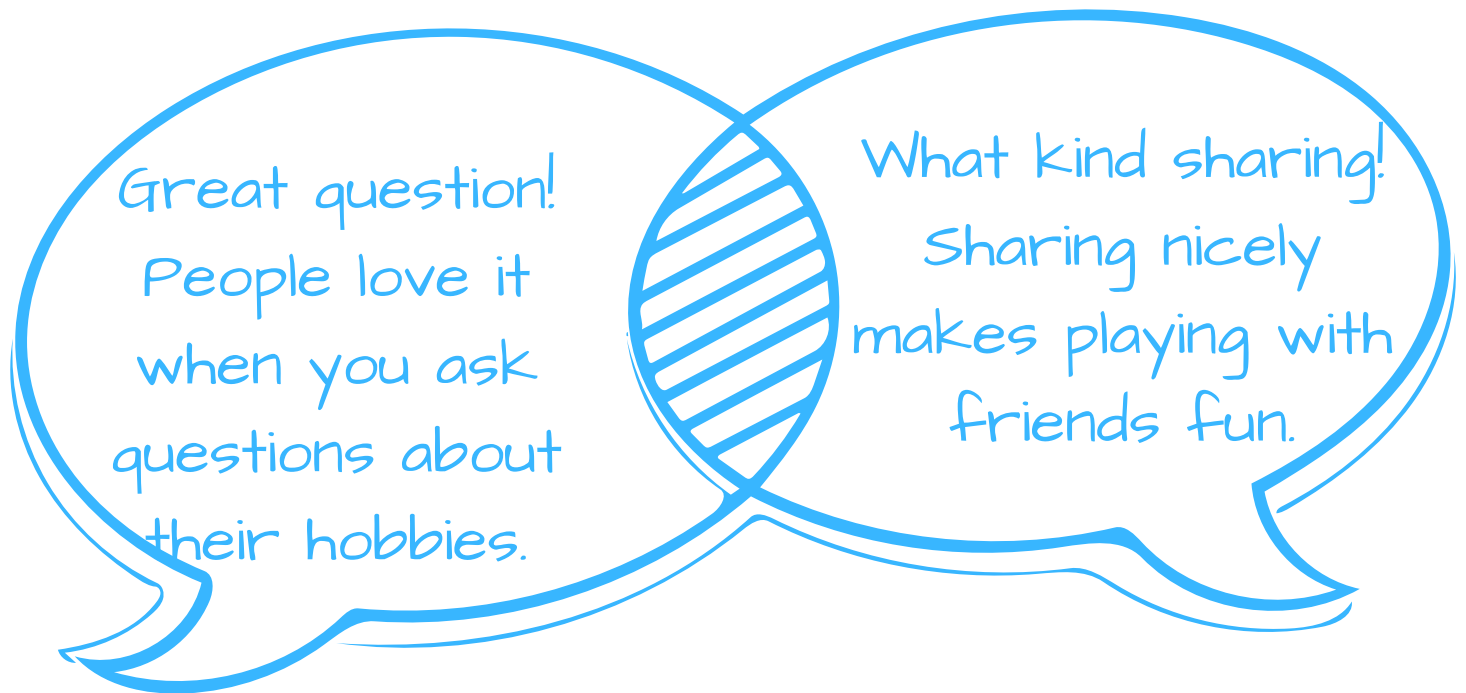
not too noisy

fast and loud

Notice and Encourage 'Good Friend' Behaviour

-3-

Notice when your child behaves in ways that are likely to make it easier for them to make and keep friends. State out loud what you like about this behaviour and why it will be helpful when making friends.



This isn't about trying to make your child behave totally differently than they naturally would, it's about noticing the traits that will lend themselves well to emerging friendships and leaning into them.

-4-

Consider Conflict

Think with your child about how to manage tricky situations. They will inevitably arise, and friendships are far more likely to succeed if your child has some basic strategies in place for managing conflict.

- Talk and Listen -

Teach and show your child the power of talking and listening to resolve issues. They could learn a go-to phrase to use in tricky situations such as:

"Let's talk about this and find a way to work together."

- Play Fair -

Talk to your child about the importance of fairness and sharing. It can also help to explore things from different points of view and help your child realise that other people might see things differently to them.

- Walk Away -

If all else fails, teach your child that it is better to walk away from a situation before things escalate.

Practise Conversation Starters

-5-

Getting the conversation started can feel tricky at any age and the right question or conversation starter can make a huge difference to easing things along. Think with your child about questions they might ask a potential new friend to get things going.

It can help to consider what kinds of questions they'd find it interesting to respond to and to practise the back and forth of the conversation so that your child can get a feel for good questions and how to keep the conversation going for a little while by asking follow up questions or offering their own ideas too.

The best conversation starters are whatever appeals to your child, but to get them started, on the next pages are a wide range of ideas suggested by my twitter followers (thank you to everyone who shared their ideas).



What's your favourite animal?

If you could have a super power, what would it be?

Would you rather go to the moon or visit the amazon rainforest?

Do you have any tricks or special skills you can show me?

If pets could talk, what would they say?

What is the one thing you want people to know about you?

Would you rather have cake or ice cream?

Would you rather be really tall or really small?

Would you rather have a pet tiger or a pet giraffe?

What's your favourite creepy-crawly?

What's something you'd really like to learn how to do?

What's something that cheers you up when you're scared or sad?

Which school rule would you like to get rid of?

What's the funniest joke you know?

What's the best thing that's happened to you today? What's the worst?

When was the last time you laughed so hard your tummy hurt?

What makes a good friend for you?

What is magic about this moment right now?

Would you rather go back or forward in time, to when and why?

What did you have for tea last night?

What makes you laugh / smile / happy?

What's your favourite food?

Do you prefer game x or game y?

What is your favourite thing about yourself?

What is your favourite shape?

What's the most disgusting thing you've ever eaten?

What magical animal do you wish was real?

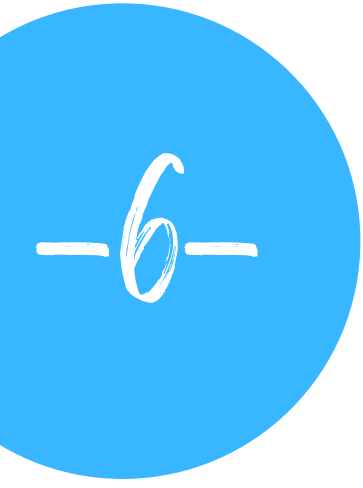
How could you get to the other side of the room without touching the floor?

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Who do you live with?

What's your favourite TV show?

Do you have any hobbies?



Learn to Join In

Sometimes, even better than starting a conversation (which can be super hard for some children) is joining in with an activity that your child thinks they'd enjoy.

This might mean joining a game of football or playing lego or drawing alongside someone. Spotting someone doing something they also enjoy can be a good way for a child to spot a potential friend with similar interests.

Talk to your child about polite ways to join in with other children. The easiest way is often simply to ask 'Can I join in?'. You could also talk to your child about starting an activity they enjoy and inviting others to join them.



You could also encourage your child to ask for help from an adult if they want to join an activity but are shy or unsure about doing so.

Set Friendship Challenges

As your child settles into a new class or setting, you could try to encourage them in their friendship-making by setting challenges for them.



This has two benefits: firstly, it will encourage you to talk to your child about their new friends each day and secondly, it will encourage your child to keep trying to make new friends even if it's hard.

Challenges could look something like:

-1-

Can you learn the names of three new people today?

-2-

Find out who has the coolest pet in your class.

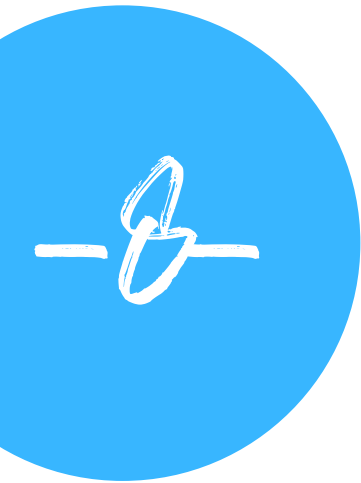
-3-

Learn a fun fact about someone new today

-4-

Can you play with someone you've never played with before?

Ask Staff to Match Make



As well as working with your child to develop the skills and strategies they need to make new friends, you could also talk to staff at the school or setting for help, especially if your child finds it harder to make new friends.

Staff will often be keen to help and as they get to know the children in their care they can often be very good at spotting and supporting potential friendships. They may also have suggestions of clubs, groups or support groups that your child might be able to access to find friends and have fun.



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Pooky x

