

14 Ways to Help Your Child with ADHD Make Friends



From the ADHD Experts at

ADDITUDE
Strategies and Support *for* ADHD & LD

ADDITUDE

Strategies and Support for ADHD & LD

A trusted source of advice and information for families touched by attention-deficit disorder—
and a voice of inspiration to help people with ADHD find success at home, at school, and on the job.

ADDitudeMag.com

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Social skills don't always come naturally to children with ADHD. Parents can help their kids make and keep friends by following these ADHD-friendly strategies.

1. Define the Skills: Kids with ADHD don't always understand how to interact with other kids. Expressing how they should behave in specific and positive terms is more effective than using phrases like, "Be nice," or "Don't be mean." Instead, tell your child to make sure to share, negotiate, compliment others, and take turns. When you notice him succeeding at one of these things, let him know you're pleased.

2. Explain Group Dynamics: Children make new acquaintances by joining in with others who are playing or talking. Explain and practice the following steps to help your child more smoothly negotiate group dynamics. First, your child should stand near two people she might be interested in meeting who are talking to each other. Look at them and say nothing, just listen. If she is interested in what they are saying, stick around. If not, move on. If she is still hanging around, tell her to notice if the two children start looking at her. If they do, they have invited her to join the conversation or game. If they don't look at her, they want to be alone. Just walk away.

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3. Role Play: Rehearse social and conversational skills with your child. Coach kids on how to behave during a play date. Cover everything from maintaining eye contact, to interrupting, to saying harsh things. Think of common play date scenarios. Then, have kids pick between two phrases, and discuss which would make other children feel better. Instead of his saying “This is boring,” teach him to say, “Can we play something else for a little while?” Instead of saying “That’s a stupid game you picked,” teach him to say, “How about we play Chutes and Ladders?”

4. Find the Right Playmates: Because many kids with ADHD lag behind their peers in social skills, they tend to be more immature than those without ADHD. As a result, kids with ADHD may feel more comfortable playing with younger children. Your child will be able to practice her friendship skills without being made fun of. As a bonus, the younger friend will most likely look up to her older buddy, instilling self-esteem in your child. Encourage visits from kids your child gets along with, especially ones that are role models of good social skills. If your child is playing with a new friend, keep the interaction short until you know the two are compatible.

5. Host a Play Date: Invite three or four friends to your house to do something your child enjoys and is good at—having pizza or playing a video game. Or, plan special events around special holidays. You could have a Cinco de Mayo festival or an MTV Video Award party. If your child shies away from groups, invite just one or two friends over.

Before the play date, remind kids that they aren’t always the boss, and help them live by the motto that the guest is always right. It neutralizes bossiness, and is easy to enforce if there’s an argument. Try to instill friendship loyalty. If another friend calls, have your child say, “I’m busy right now, but thanks. I’ll get back to you later.”

Then, make an excuse to hang around in a nearby room to see how things go. Parents who get the best results intervene at the “point of performance”—in the setting where and when the skill is required. As your child gets older, it’s best to let him handle social situations on his own, but be available to talk.

6. Use a Behavioral Report Card: Make a list of the social skills you’ve practiced along with a reward for successfully using it. This type of contract sets children up for success by telling them what to do and when to do it, and by providing incentives. The social approval that results will eventually

“Sign up your child for only two activities—leave time for play dates.” —Fred Frankel, Ph.D.

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be its own reward. Typically, a behavioral report card lets a child earn points for behaviors and trade them in for rewards. The best rewards are enjoyable activities—such as staying up late, taking a bubble bath, or renting a video—rather than money, food, or costly toys.

7. Help Kids Stop Interrupting: Kids with ADHD don't always realize that they are interrupting, or that their behavior is disturbing to their friends. Simply telling them that they shouldn't interrupt doesn't help. Even if they know it's wrong, their impulsivity overrides their self-control.

Parents can help with “No Interrupting” training. Tell your child that you're going to be doing an activity that can't be interrupted (say, talking on the phone). Set your child up with a task that will hold her attention while you're talking, and then take breaks every few minutes to visit with your child and praise her for not interrupting.

Then add an incentive. Begin the week with a pot of five dollars. Assign a value—say 10 cents—to each bead on an abacus or other visual counter. Each time you have to slide a bead because of an interruption, 10 cents should be removed from the pot. At the end of the week, your child gets to keep what's left. Take your child out for a treat with the money she's earned.

If impulsive behavior—dominating play, interrupting, jumping from one thing to the next—consistently keeps other kids away, medication could help children get control of this ADHD symptom.

8. Ask for Help from Teachers: Talk with the teacher and ask if she can pair up students to tackle some classwork and projects together. Your child won't get lost in the chaotic process of picking partners and feel left out and unconnected. Plus, working with a classmate will strongly encourage your child to practice his social skills.

Teachers can encourage social skills for the whole class by taking playground breaks from the classroom routine whenever possible. Children relax when they play games that everyone knows—and they forget their differences. Weakness that may show up in the classroom may disappear on the playground. The best choices are noncompetitive games, like “Amoeba Tag,” in which the goal is for everyone to be “It.”

“Friendships are not a luxury. They're a necessity.” —Richard Lavoie, special-education consultant in Barnstable, Massachusetts

MOM, I MADE A NEW FRIEND!

Help your child make and keep buddies by following these “friendly” strategies. additudemag.com/slideshow/24/

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9. Tease-Proof Your Child: Good social skills can help fend off a bully at school. The most effective technique for deflecting teasing is humor. Rehearse humorous comebacks to classmates who tease your child. He should never tease back. Some examples include: “Boo-hoo” (said half-heartedly and pretending to rub one eye with a closed fist), “So what?”, “I heard that one in kindergarten,” “Tell me when you get to the funny part,” “And your point is...”, “Talk to the hand ‘cause the face ain’t listening.” Once you’ve armed your child with socially acceptable ways to respond, let him play the role of the child being teased while you play the teaser. Then switch roles, varying the “script” to explore the different ways in which the scenario could play out. You might videotape the role-playing sessions and review the tapes at a later time with your child to reinforce appropriate behavior.

Remember to let your child know that it’s normal to be upset by teasing, that it is not OK for children to pick on him.

10. Set a Good Example: Demonstrate social skills, so your child can follow your example. The simple acts of making friends with other parents, having relatives over for dinner, and keeping in touch with friends through PTA groups and church teach your child about social skills. Showing your child how you make friends may give him clues on how he can do it. Plus, telling other parents about your child’s social issues makes them more likely to take an interest. They might encourage other children to include your child in activities.

11. Try a Social Skills Training Program: Sometimes the direct approach works best. Sign up your child for a social skills program outside of school or talk with the guidance counselor or special needs teacher in your school to form a social skills group. Educational experts highly recommend the following programs: Project ACHIEVE’s Stop & Think Social Skills Program; Skillstreaming the Adolescent, developed by Arnold Goldstein and Ellen McGinnis; and “Social Skills Autopsy,” developed by Rick Lavoie.

12. Stay Positive: Progress often comes slowly, so praise him for his efforts every inch of the way. As your child learns new social skills, don’t blast him when he makes missteps. Be patient and pick up a cue from your child to gently suggest advice. If your child complains that no one likes her or she doesn’t have any friends, hear her out. Then say, “Sometimes kids with ADD have trouble getting along with friends. There are some things you can do to get along better with your friends. Want to hear about them?” At this point, she will be all ears.

FREE SOCIAL SKILLS GUIDE

Find tips to help your child make friends, stand up to bullies, and develop a social network.

[additudemag.com/
resource-center/
friendships-for-adhd-
kids.html](http://additudemag.com/resource-center/friendships-for-adhd-kids.html)

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13. Create special moments at home: Plan 15 minutes of quality time with your child several times each week. Do fun things together, just the two of you, without directing or criticizing his behavior. If you're at a baseball game, talk about his favorite player or whether the team has a chance of winning the World Series. Building a relationship with your child pays off in terms of friendships. Some studies show that when parents work on relationship-building at home, they see better behavior in a child's peer relationships right away.

14. Don't forget to embrace your child's differences: Kids don't have to be the same as everyone else. Not every child with ADHD will be a social butterfly—and that's OK. Studies show that having one close friend is enough to develop self-confidence. Most socially isolated children will eventually learn how to handle their behaviors and establish friendships on their own. Once adolescence hits, kids tend to act on the urge to fit in. There will be friends for your child in the future, even if it takes a little while.

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A Parents Guide to Effective ADHD Discipline

A better-behavior plan for the most oppositional, defiant children

Nothing works. You take away electronics or special activities, and he couldn't care less. You try rewards, points, praise, consequences – nothing turns around his behavior. He shows no remorse, and you feel like a failed parent. Sound familiar? This 25-page ebook, filled with expert tips and solutions is a game-changer.

>> Learn more about this special report: <http://additude.mybigcommerce.com/parents-guide-to-adhd-discipline/>

The ADHD Childcare Guide

From discipline to bedtime, practical advice for the caregivers of spirited children with ADHD

Children with ADHD are not willfully bad or temperamental. But somehow they end up with more bruises, meltdowns, damaging messes, and exasperated caregivers than all of their friends combined. As their parents, even we have trouble getting it right all of the time. And we know all too well that babysitters, grandparents, and other caregivers need special training and tools—whether they know it or not.

>> Learn more about this special report: <http://additude.mybigcommerce.com/adhd-childcare-guide/>

A Parent's Guide to ADHD Diet & Nutrition

Learn about the foods, vitamins, supplements and herbs that can help your child better manage her ADHD symptoms.

Understanding the connection between the food your child eats and his or her hyperactivity, focus, and impulsivity is not easy. Which is why the *ADDitude* editors have pulled together all the science-based facts you need to know about ADHD, diet & nutrition in this special report.

>> Learn more about this special report: <http://additude.mybigcommerce.com/adhd-diet-nutrition/>

FREE ADDitude Downloadable Booklets

4 Parent-Child Therapies for Better Behavior

Many families living with ADHD use behavior therapy and family training programs to break the cycle of bad behavior and defiance.

50 Smart Discipline Tips for Your ADHD Child

The best techniques from parenting experts for dealing with dishonesty, getting your child to take you seriously, and much more!

A Routine That Works for Your ADHD Child

Customize this hour-by-hour routine for your ADHD child—and make your day less stressful.

13 Parenting Strategies for ADHD Kids

What does it take to be a great parent to your ADHD child? Here's what works, and why.

When You Have ADHD Too

18 tips for parents with ADHD—advice on balancing career, housework, and childcare when you share a diagnosis.

Homework Help for ADHD Children

Addressing homework problems is critical – here's how to do it.

You Know Your Child Has ADHD When...

Parents of ADHD children on the funny side to living with ADHD symptoms.

**Find these and many
more free ADHD
resources online at:**
[http://additu.de/
freedownloads](http://additu.de/freedownloads)

FREE ADHD Webinar Replays from ADDitude:

Practical Advice from Parents Who ‘Get’ ADHD

>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/11601.html>

Peter Jensen, M.D., shares the best parenting tips from families who’ve been there, done that, and mastered attention deficit from the questions to ask your child’s doctor to winning over unsupportive family and friends.

“Why Don’t I Have a Best Friend?”

>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/11568.html>

Nothing is quite as heartbreaking for a parent as seeing your child repeatedly strike out in the social arena. Just because he wants to make friends, doesn’t mean he can turn into a social butterfly overnight. Fortunately, there are some things parents can do to help. Fred Frankel, Ph.D., shares strategies for helping your child foster true friendships.

Social Success Strategies

>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/10656.html>

Children with ADHD may have a hard time making close friends. Michelle Garcia Winner give parents strategies they can use to teach their child a social “vocabulary” and help them master interactions.

Positive Parenting

>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/10271.html/>

Improving behavior in elementary-aged children through consistency, external motivators, and selective negative consequences, from Mary Rooney, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist at the ADHD and Disruptive Behavior Disorders Center. Learn the importance of consistency for kids!

Friends Forever

>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/10295.html>

Dealing with an emotionally volatile teen? It could be her ADHD. Thomas E. Brown, Ph.D., offers strategies for maintaining emotional control, as well as advice for teaching teens to find emotional balance.

FREE ADHD Newsletters from ADDitude

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<http://additu.de/email>

Adult ADHD and LD (weekly)

Expert advice on managing your household, time, money, career, and relationships

Parenting ADHD and LD Children (weekly)

Strategies and support for parents on behavior and discipline, time management, disorganization, and making friends.

ADHD and LD at School (bimonthly; weekly from August through October)

How to get classroom accommodations, finish homework, work with teachers, find the right schools, and much more.

Treating ADHD (weekly)

Treatment options for attention deficit including medications, food, supplements, brain training, mindfulness and other alternative therapies.