
SOCIAL SKILLS TEACHING FOR JUNIOR CLASSES

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INTRODUCTION

Why Teach Social Skills?

Positive social behaviours and skills are perhaps the most important skills that children need to learn to lead a successful and happy life. These skills include such things as: following instructions, conversation skills, turn taking, friendship skills, developing confidence and self esteem, learning adequate self-control over emotions and behaviours, putting in effort, being able to consider other points of view, cooperative skills, compromise and problem-solving skills, etc. Having these skills not only helps a child get on well at home and at school but also is likely to lead to a child having more friends, improved self-esteem, having a satisfying, productive school career and being a much happier person. **As children learn these positive behaviours and skills they also tend to develop the positive attitudes and respect towards others that go with these behaviours and skills.**

The younger the child the easier it is to teach these skills and conversely the older the child and the more entrenched their inappropriate patterns of behaviour, the harder it is to teach positive behaviours and attitudes. There is a wealth of research showing that children as young as four to six years of age with anti-social patterns of behaviour and poor self-control often do not grow out of these problems - they generally develop into young adults with more serious patterns of anti-social behaviour and anger problems. An interesting research finding for teachers is that

non-compliance to adult requests in five-six year olds is the behaviour that most powerfully predicts future behaviour problems Hence the importance of teaching social skills in the junior school and ensuring young children acquire the key social skills for succeeding socially and academically at school.

As teachers, one of the very best things we can do for children is to teach them the positive skills and behaviours they need to get on well at school and in life. We use as much teaching, guidance, reinforcement and discipline as needed to bring this about. If we do this we give children a great start towards success at school and in fact towards leading a satisfying, successful life. A lack of these skills usually represents a significant barrier to learning. If children don't learn these positive social skills early in their school careers then these children are at risk of a whole host of negative outcomes both at school and at home and in later life.

This book suggests a variety of teaching strategies and attempts to systematically teach the key social skills through three key elements:

- The important social skills are identified
- The strategies teachers can use to teach social skills are listed
- The above two points are combined in a structured programme that systematically teaches one skill per week based on charts and daily activities including role plays and using children's story books

*Thanks for the kit.
I'll start it this afternoon.*



*I like your enthusiasm
but please, please, read
the next four pages first.*



KEY SOCIAL SKILLS - AN OVERVIEW

The aim is to systematically teach the key social skills children need to succeed at school

The skills can be incorporated into assemblies, citizenship lessons and general school teaching. There are many different social skills that can be taught. The 15 social skills have been arrived at after going through numerous social skills checklists and programmes and talking to many teachers. These 15 social skills (and the associated subskills) represent a comprehensive coverage of the important social skills children need to learn and can be grouped into four categories of behaviour.

The four categories and 15 key skills are:

Behaviour Towards Teachers/Authority (Ability to accept authority/direction).

1. Doing What the Teacher Says
2. Speaking Pleasantly to Adults and Using Manners
3. Being Helpful and Co-operative
4. Accepting Consequences for Misbehaviour

Classroom Behaviour (Ability to get on with school work)

5. Following Class Rules
6. Listening to the Teacher
7. Putting Effort into Work
8. Working Independently

Behaviour Towards Peers (Ability to get on with others)

9. Speaking Pleasantly
10. Being Friendly
11. Taking Turns and Sharing
12. Leaving Other People's Things Alone

Self Management (Ability to show self control/deal with emotions)

13. Expressing your Feelings
14. Managing Anger
15. Coping with Frustration/Not Getting Your Own Way

It is one thing to identify the key social skills children need to learn and quite another to successfully teach them to young children, especially those children with behaviour problems. Effective teachers of young children have always tried to teach and reinforce the positive social skills mentioned above using a variety of techniques including: their own example, demonstrations, reminders, practice, role plays, praise and reprimand, etc.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF EACH SKILL TAKES 10 - 20 MINUTES A DAY FOR A WEEK

This pattern applies to each of the 15 skills

Day 1

Introduce skill using chart, discussion and perhaps story

Day 2

Role play (preferably by the teacher and an other adult)

Day 3

Activity/activity sheet related to the skill

Day 4

Game/activity sheet related to the skill

Day 5

Review skill using chart and story

Follow Up

Activities suitable for follow up and reinforcement of skill.

The skills are in no particular order and can be taught in any order. If the teacher considers some skills do not need to be taught to a particular class, then those skills can be left out or a school may choose to teach some in the first year of school and the more difficult skills in the second year of school. The outline for teaching the skills is a guide and teachers should feel free to modify role plays and activities if they have ideas that they think will work better with their class. However, before deviating too much from the programme consider that charts discussion, role play, practice, stories, reinforcement, relevant activities, review and follow up have been deliberately included to enhance the teaching of these skills and leaving out some of these components may lessen the effectiveness of the programme. **The ideas are written so that they can be used in two ways - as a whole class teaching programme or as an individual programme for children with behaviour problems**

Provided for each skill is:

- A chart listing the skill and subskills for each skill

- A page detailing the daily activities for each skill when teaching the whole class
- A page detailing additional daily activities for each skill when teaching individual children who have behaviour problems or need additional instruction
- Photocopy masters of activity sheets and incentive/monitoring charts

Teaching Tips

- Role plays are best performed by two adults so skills (or failing to use them) are clearly shown. Including children in extra role playing/demonstration will be beneficial.
- Teachers may spend two weeks on skills such as "using manners" or "being friendly".
- Many teachers will find it useful to build up their own list of books/stories for each skill. Books and stories that are readily available in their own school can relate to an aspect of the social skill. Share suggestions.

FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS

1. Teachers becoming more aware of
 - the specific social skills children need to learn
 - the strategies to use to teach and reinforce social skills
2. Role playing and demonstration of skills
3. Charts that list the subskills and clarify what each skill means
4. Can be used as a structured programme to follow that systematically teaches each skill
5. Activities and games that teach, practice and reinforce skills
6. The use of children's story books to provide examples
7. The teacher emphasising and reinforcing children's use of social skills
8. Ongoing follow up by the teacher

STRATEGIES TO TEACH SOCIAL SKILLS

- **State the positive behaviours required and why** (often including the positive attitude or idea that goes with them - this is verbalising the skills and the reasons and feelings involved).
- **Model use of positive skills** or get other children to demonstrate.
- **Role plays** using social skills.
- **Look for and praise examples of children using these skills** including stating why the skills are important/helpful.
- **Regularly remind/prompt** the use of these skills.
- **Use of praise and rewards** for positive behaviours.
- **Get the child to repeat a behaviour correctly** if they have not shown appropriate use of skill.
- **Get the child to verbalise the skill** and the reason for doing it.
- **Systematically teach skill** through instruction demonstration, practice and reinforcement.
- **If appropriate, use consequences for unacceptable behaviour** stating why the behaviour was unacceptable and what the child should have done instead.
- **Using "incidents" that arise as opportunities to teach appropriate behaviours.**
- **Expressing disappointment or concern when children do not use appropriate social skills.**

These are the main teaching strategies to effectively teach social skills and teachers should try to make these strategies part of their everyday teaching strategies. They are listed as a checklist along with the additional strategies for difficult children on the next page so that a teacher can now and again check whether they are using them or not. (Try checking the above list daily for one week to evaluate your use of these strategies).

Some teachers already do this very well. They automatically remind children of the social skills to use; they notice children using a particular social skill well and hold that child up as an example, they demonstrate the skill themselves; they frequently use instances of inappropriate social behaviours as opportunities to teach the correct behaviour and they don't let many instances of inappropriate behaviour go unnoticed. In short, by their everyday practices these teachers are giving children the message "these positive social behaviours are important, all children are expected to behave in these positive ways and part of my job as a teacher is to ensure children do behave in these ways so that they will get on well at school and with other children - and our school will be a more pleasant place for everyone"

All teachers can learn to effectively teach and reinforce social skills by:

- a) being aware of what the important social behaviours are;
- b) getting into the habit of regularly using the above strategies.

TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS TO CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

Children with behaviour problems are likely to need more instruction and practice in the use of these social skills than they receive through the basic lessons. Additional ideas and strategies for teaching these skills to such children is given on the second page of teaching suggestions for each skill. The individualised activities can be used in conjunction with the class or totally independent from them.

Key strategies for individual instruction

- **The most powerful teaching strategy is direct instruction that is combined with monitoring, reinforcement and consequences - usually done with a monitoring chart (see samples).**
Demonstrate the behaviour, tell the child exactly what you are doing and why, get the child to repeat your behaviour and give the child feedback on how they did it. This needs to be followed up with opportunities for the child to use the skill and feedback given including reinforcement or consequences if necessary.

ie: a) teacher models and explains
 b) child practices and receives feedback from the teacher
 c) opportunities to use the skill are monitored and feedback given
 d) consistent use of reinforcement and consequences
- **Establish a positive relationship so child wants to cooperate.** A positive relationship and cooperative child makes the teaching process much easier and success more likely.
- **Role plays can be a powerful strategy for teaching social skills.**
- **Set up opportunities for the child to use the skill and give feedback.**

- **Prime, prompt or cue** the child so they know in what situations they should use the skill - if necessary just before the skill is required.
- **Give feedback on their use of skills** very consistently.
- **Use as much positive reinforcement as possible initially.** This is likely to include incentive charts and some form of incentive.
- **You may need to consistently use a consequence** if the child doesn't bother using the skill even though they have learned how.
- **Get the child to repeat the behaviour correctly** if they have not used appropriate skill.

NB: Children with significant behaviour problems are likely to have learned and practiced their inappropriate behaviours to such an extent that they have become entrenched patterns of behaviour. They are often best viewed as "bad habits" that have developed over time and which need to be replaced with positive behaviours. Extra effort, incentives and consistent use of consequences are often needed to overcome their previously learned behaviour patterns. Some of these children with behaviour problems will not be motivated to change their unacceptable behaviour until consequences are consistently applied. They will also need consistent and ongoing follow up (monitoring, reinforcement, reminders, consequences) over a period of months if use of the skills taught is going to be maintained.

DOING WHAT THE TEACHER SAYS

1. Listen to what the teacher says
2. Think “What do I have to do?”
3. Do it straight away



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Whole Class Teaching Suggestions

Day 1 Introduce the skill and discuss why children need to do what the teacher says. (You could list these on board). Then go through the three points on chart 1 either demonstrating yourself, getting a child to demonstrate, or pointing out examples of children doing these things. Read story and discuss.

Day 2 Role play with another teacher/adult what happens if you don't do what the teacher says. Discuss role play.

- e.g.
- Teacher says *walk*. Other runs, bangs into desk, falls over, hurts knee.
 - Teacher says *how to do something*. Other teacher doesn't listen. Does it wrong (eg, folding paper to make shape doesn't work out) - gets frustrated.

Go through chart again.

Day 3 Activity: Picture of smiling child to colour in with speech bubble or caption to fill in.

- e.g.
- Doing what the teacher says:*
 - Keeps us safe*
 - Helps us learn*
 - Makes our class a happy place*
 - Helps us behave well*

Go through points on chart.

Day 4 Play "Following Instructions" using a timer. Children have to follow instructions quickly and sensibly. If everyone does within a certain time the teacher colours in one of the 20 spots on a chart The teacher may give up to 10 instructions during a game, colouring in spots earned. Rest of spots are earned by the class following instructions quickly enough during the day. When all spots are coloured in the class gets a reward e.g. class game. Review points on chart.

Day 5 Read story to class and discuss. Discuss how the week has gone. Comment on children who have been using The skill.

Follow Up

Reinforce (praise/points, etc) examples of children following instructions quickly and use appropriate punishments for children who don't follow instructions promptly. Play "Following Instructions" and use chart.

Children's Stories

The Surprise Party	- Pat Hutchins	(listening)
The Story of Ping	- Margorie Flack	(not following instructions)
Little Pink Pig	- Pat Hutchins	(not following instructions)
Peter Rabbit	- Beatrix Potter	(not following instructions)
Little Red Riding Hood		(not following instructions)
Alexander's Outing	- Pamela Allen	(not following instructions)
Mr Gumpy's Outing	- John Burningham	(not following instructions)
You Can't Catch Me	- John Prater	(not following instructions)