

Social Skills IEP Goals — Preschool & Pre-K

14 measurable goals written to IDEA standards. Replace [student] and [date]; adjust criteria to the student's baseline.

Social skills at this age start with proximity and imitation, not conversation — a student who tolerates a peer nearby or copies their play is building the foundation for turn-taking and cooperative play later. There's no norm chart here either; track what this student is actually doing during play.

PLAYING WITH OTHERS

1. [student] will engage in parallel play alongside a peer for [X] minutes without conflict, across 3 consecutive observations.
2. [student] will engage in cooperative play with a peer (sharing a toy, taking turns) for [X] minutes, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
3. [student] will take a turn with a toy or material when prompted by an adult or peer, in 4 of 5 opportunities.
4. [student] will imitate a peer's play action (building, pretend play) within an activity, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.

JOINT ATTENTION & SOCIAL INITIATION

5. [student] will follow a peer's or adult's point or gaze to a shared object, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
6. [student] will initiate a social interaction with a peer (offering a toy, showing an item) without adult prompting, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
7. [student] will respond to a peer's greeting or bid for attention (name, wave, "hi") within 5 seconds, in 4 of 5 opportunities.

RECOGNIZING & RESPONDING TO EMOTIONS

8. [student] will identify a basic emotion (happy, sad, mad) on a peer's face or in a picture, with 80% accuracy across 4 of 5 trials.
9. [student] will respond to a peer who is upset with a simple comforting action (a pat, offering a toy) when prompted, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.

GROUP PARTICIPATION

10. [student] will sit with a small group during a shared activity (circle time, snack) without leaving, for [X] minutes, across 3 consecutive observations.
11. [student] will wait for a turn during a group game or activity, using a visual cue, in 4 of 5 opportunities.
12. [student] will follow a simple group direction given to the whole class, alongside peers, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
13. [student] will use a taught phrase ("my turn," "can I play?") to join an activity, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
14. [student] will tolerate a peer's proximity during a shared activity without engaging in the target behavior, across 4 of 5 observed opportunities.

Using These Social Skills Goals at Preschool & Pre-K

Parallel play is a real skill, not a lesser one

Playing alongside a peer without conflict is a legitimate precursor to cooperative play — don't skip straight to “sharing” goals before this is solid.

Imitation is how young children learn social scripts

A student copying a peer's pretend-play action is practicing social skills, even without any verbal exchange.

Joint attention comes before conversation

Following a peer's point or gaze to a shared object is the developmental building block that later becomes back-and-forth conversation.

Comfort with proximity is worth its own goal

For some students, tolerating a peer nearby during an activity is the actual target, not a given.

Every criterion here (4 of 5, 80%) is a placeholder — there's no standardized play-skills benchmark at this age. Set the real numbers from a week of observation during play.

Tired of rebuilding these forms every year?

IEP Goal Writer also drafts your PLAAFP and progress notes from the same student profile — free to try at iepgoalwriter.pro