

Peer Interaction Activities

Washing Dishes

Place plastic dishes in a tub with bubbles or water. Provide sponges or dish wands so children can wash dishes together. Infants will explore the dish tub together as you draw their attention to each other's actions by narrating. Provide positive attention like, "You are washing the dishes together!" For toddlers, provide a towel and have children hand dishes to a child with a towel, so they are working together cooperatively. Be prepared to model, prompt, and give positive attention when children interact.

Blocks

Infants will bang blocks together or explore them in parallel play. Toddlers can begin to learn to take turns stacking to make a tower. Establish a process so toddlers know when it is appropriate to knock the tower down. As toddlers get older, they can learn to wait longer to knock down the tower.

Balls

Face infants toward each other when rolling balls. You may also use foam play equipment to keep the balls within the space between the babies. When a ball rolls from one baby to another (usually accidentally), comment that Baby A rolled the ball to Baby B and facilitate rolling the ball back. Use names and narrate frequently. Toddlers can make choices about how to share the ball with each other (bounce, roll, kick, throw).

Walking and Greeting

When walking an infant, use different holds, such as the football hold, to help the baby see what peers are doing. Walk around the room, using peers' name as you approach them. Lean baby toward peer and talk about what the peer is doing. Model waving "hi" as you approach children in the room. When a toddler is upset and chooses to follow you, spend time bringing her attention to her peers. Ask, "What is ____ doing?" Model good social skills by asking peers, "How are you?" "What are you doing?" Talk about what the other children are doing, and include actions, intentions, and feelings.

Peek-a-Boo

Play peek-a-boo by first using a blanket on your own face. Then, if the baby enjoys it, use the blanket on the baby's face. Then, face babies toward each other and facilitate them playing peek-a-boo with each other. You will need to assist with the words (Where's ____? Peek-a-boo! You found him!) and actions (hiding baby with a blanket, assisting in pulling off blanket, etc.). Toddlers will often enjoy peek-a-boo, as well, but may also transition into an early version of hide and seek.

Big Pictures

Cover a table with butcher paper, or tape butcher paper to the floor. Set crayons out and let children make a picture together. Point out what peers are doing, using names. Watch for opportunities to model and give positive attention for sharing.



Peer Interaction Phrases

"Look, Zoey is making a _____!"

"Ben is sad today. Let's give him his blankie."

"Jo is having fun playing with the babies."

"I like how you shared the book with Diego."

"You're taking turns building!"

"You can help Amelia put away the blocks."

"Xavier is here! We can say, 'Hi, Xavier!'"

"Lilly is going bye-bye. 'Bye, Lilly!'"

"What is Alex doing?"

"Where is Seth?"

"I'm changing Jesse's diaper now, and then we can play."

"Elsie's crayon rolled away. Can you hand it to her?"

"Evan is so sleepy. It's time for his nap. You can say, 'Night-night, Evan.'"

"Eloise likes gentle touches."

"Tim is mad because he was playing with that toy. You can say, 'Sorry, Tim.'"

"Beth is all done with her lunch."

"Maven likes her green beans. She ate them all up."

"Sam thought that was funny. He wants you to do it again."