

Asking to join in

Making friends and joining in games can be tricky for any child. The good news is, with a bit of practice and support, children can learn simple ways to ask to be included. Here are some tips for helping your child join in:

- **Teach simple phrases or signs:** Help your child practice saying or signing things like “Can I play too?”, “What are you playing?”, or “Can I join?”
- **Use body language:** Smiling, making eye contact, waving, or pointing at the game can be powerful ways to show they’re interested in joining.
- **Model and role-play:** Practise scenarios at home where your child approaches a group and asks to play. Use dolls, action figures, or role reversal to build confidence.
- **The importance of timing:** Sometimes it helps to wait for a break in the game before asking to join. Teach your child how to wait, watch, and then approach at the right time.
- **Negative responses:** Teach them that not all children will be willing to share or play and that is alright. They can say “ok” and look for someone else to play with.
- **Play dates:** Organising play dates is a great way to build your child’s confidence and for families to model social strategies.
- **Work with teachers:** Let your child’s school know you’re working on this skill. Teachers can support social opportunities at recess or group time by pairing your child with friendly peers.
- **Encourage participation in group activities:** Involvement in structured group settings, like sports or clubs, can enhance social skills and provide natural opportunities for interaction.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Praise your child for trying, even if they’re not always invited in straight away. Confidence builds over time.



Building the confidence to ask to join in is a huge step toward friendships and belonging. With practice and encouragement, your child can feel more comfortable reaching out — and more included in everyday fun.