

How to Run Social Skills Groups

A Webinar by Speech and Language Kids
& The Speech Therapy Solution



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Social Skills Groups for Preschoolers

Topics to Cover:

- Asking a friend to play
- Protesting when someone takes something away
- Saying “in a minute” if you’re not done with something
- Requesting and Responding to Requests
- Getting attention before requesting
- Introducing and responding to introductions
- Asking for help, responding to requests for help
- Showing something or making a comment on another child’s play
- Asking friend a question and responding to questions
- Offering a toy to another child
- Using a variety of strategies to perpetuate play/interactions
- Playing social games like tag

Format for Sessions (PK)

- **Start with an opening song:** We always did a song that included “hello” and “how are you” so they could practice answering social greetings
- **Teach lesson, introduce one skill at a time**
 - Social Stories
 - Video Modeling
 - Demonstrations
- **Students practice**
 - Role Playing
 - Answering Questions
 - Pair off or in Groups
- **Come back together and sum up / review**
- **Give information to classroom teachers and parents** to encourage practice after the session (or do some push-in yourself to get carry-over)
- At the beginning of the next session, review topic or observe in free play to see if the students are using the skill. If not, repeat the lesson again

Social Skills Groups for Elementary School

Topics to Cover:

- Hygiene
- Manners
- Listening
- Sharing Materials
- Taking Turns
- Conversational Skills (like topic maintenance and responding to peers appropriately)
- Being respectful and having empathy
- Expected behavior for different situations (like classroom, hallway, cafeteria, etc.)
- Managing Emotions
- Making and Keeping Friends



Format for Sessions (Elementary)

- **Teach lesson, introduce one skill at a time**
 - Social Stories
 - Video Modeling
 - Demonstrations
- **Students practice**
 - Role Playing
 - Answering Questions
 - Pair off or in Groups
- **Come back together and sum up / review**
- **Assign Homework** and ask each student to write in a journal about using or practicing the skill (or lack thereof)
- At the beginning of the next session, review topic and review their homework to see if the students are using the skill. If not, repeat the lesson again

Social Skills Groups for Middle School and High School

Topics to Cover:

- Emotional Management (Anger, anxiety, etc.)
- Apologizing to friends
- Self-Confidence Issues/Self Appearance
- Peer pressure
- Bullying and Teasing
- Classroom Behavior
- Interactions with the Opposite Sex and Dating
- Conversational Skills (topic maintenance, compromising, group conversation rules)
- Online interactions
- Secrets and Lies

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Format for Sessions (Middle/High School)

- **Introduce the topic.** Ask for opinions about how the students do with that skill.
- **Outline rules for standard behavior** as it relates to that skill. Ask for student input here.
- Have students **practice the skill** in the controlled environment of the speech room.
- **Assign homework** to practice the skill in daily activities. Have them write about their attempts in journal including what they're struggling with.
- **Review journals** and talk through trouble-shooting during next session. Talk about what each person could have done better in a certain situation. Have the student who was in the situation go first.

Data Collection

- Create a quick form that will allow you to take data for all students on the same sheet
- Decide on two very specific skills you will take data on. Break your overall skill into two parts (like getting attention and making a request for the overall skill of requesting).
- Use rubric-style data collection based on how independently they performed the skills

Social Language Group Data Collection Form

Date: _____ Therapists: _____

Skill One: _____

Skill Two: _____

Child's Name: _____

Skill One: Prompting needed

1 = Independent, no prompts

2 = Visual reminder

3 = Verbal reminder (use your words, etc)

4 = Verbal model

5 = Hand-over-hand assistance

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PK Sample Lesson Plan

Target Skill: Initiating Interactions (Asking a friend to play with a two-person toy, like playing catch)

Activity One: Greeting

- Adult greets the children and then begins a song. Before singing to each child, adult asks the group what the child's name is. Then, lead adult sings the song:
- To the tune of Goodnight Ladies: "Hello ____, Hello ____, Hello ____ How are you?"
- Adult helps children with correct response.

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PK Sample Lesson Cont.

Activity Two: Story

- Adult reads social story “Come Play with me”
 - Sometimes I like to play by myself
 - But sometimes, it’s more fun to play with a friend
 - If I want to play with a friend, I can say “Play with me”
 - A lot of toys are more fun with a friend
 - If I want to ride a see saw with my friend, I can say “want to ride the see saw with me?”
 - If I want to play catch with a friend, I can say, “Want to play catch with me?”
 - If I want to play in the wagon with a friend, I can say “want to play in the wagon with me?”

PK Sample Lesson Cont.

Activity Three: Kid Demonstration

- Take two children and walk them through asking a friend to play by saying the child's name and then asking a specific question (have two-person toys out as options)

Activity Four: All children practice

- If you have multiple adults, separate into two groups and give each child a chance to practice. If you're by yourself, it will just take a little longer.

PK Sample Lesson Cont.

Activity Five: One Child Chooses

- All children line up and one child gets to practice. The child chooses one child and one activity and then asks the child to play with that activity. They go off and play and another child comes up to practice. Make sure everyone gets a chance to be the chooser.

Activity Six: Review and Goodbye Song

- Adult reads the story and talks about what the children practiced as well as asking questions for comprehension. Then, adult leads a goodbye song that is the same as the original song but says “goodbye ____...Have a great day!”

PK Sample Lesson Cont.

Homework:

- Tell teachers and parents what you're working on. Give them a brief summary and tell them what they can do to help the child practice at home.
- Ask them to give you feedback about how it goes.

When to Move On:

- Either do observations in the regular education setting or use your data from the controlled situations in therapy to see when they master the skill. Then, move on to another skill.

Elementary School Sample Lesson Plan

Targeted Skill: Topic Maintenance

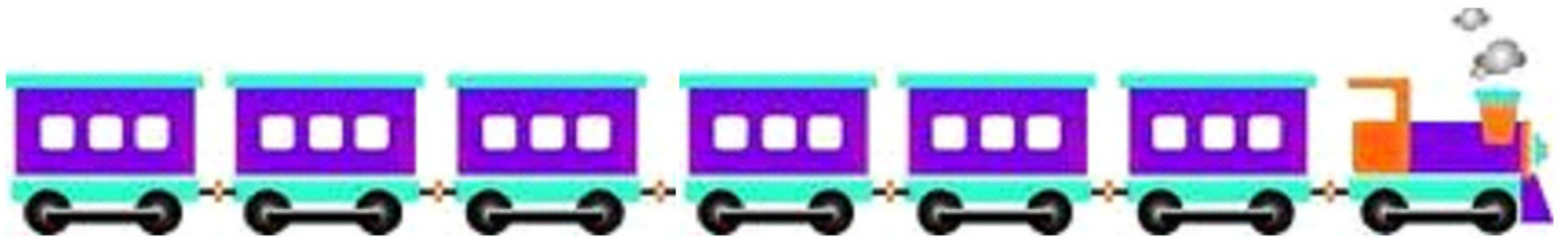
Activity One: Introducing Topic

- Adult talks with children about what it means to “stay on topic”
- Use Topic Maintenance Train to demonstrate what it sounds like when you fall off the train.
- Give the children a sample topic and then say comments and have the children identify if it's on the same topic or a different topic.



Topic Maintenance Train

The Topic Maintenance Railroad



Topic: _____

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Elementary School Sample Lesson Cont.

Activity Two: Students Practice as a Group

- One student volunteers and you give him a topic. He must then say 6 things about the topic while tracking progress on the train. Other students listen to see if he gets off topic.
- Each student gets to practice this way.
- Next, two students have a back and forth conversation about a given topic where each takes a turn saying one thing about the topic. Other students listen to see if they get off topic.

Elementary School Sample Lesson Cont.

Activity Three: Students Pair off to Practice

- Students break into pairs (or a group of three if an odd number) and each pair is given a topic. They must go back and forth and catch each other if they get off topic. Adult moves around room to monitor progress. Instruct them to pick a new topic after a few minutes.

Activity Four: Sum Up and Review

- Come back together and discuss how they thought it went. Was it hard? Easy? Talk about why topic maintenance is important.

Elementary School Sample Lesson Cont.

Activity Five: Give Homework

- Give each student a notebook and tell them their homework is to write about one time during the week that they tried to stay on topic, had trouble staying on topic, or noticed someone else not staying on topic. It will be due on their next lesson.

Activity Six: The Next Session

- During the next session, review how homework went, ask questions about comprehension, and decide if the lesson needs to be taught and practiced again or if you are ready to move on.

MS/HS Sample Plan

Topic: How to Converse in a Group

Activity One: Introduce Topic

- Ask students how they do during group conversations
- Ask students if their friends ever give them negative feedback about their contributions to group conversations (including non-verbal like walking away or avoiding)

MS/HS Sample Cont.

Activity Two: Outline Rules for Standard Behavior

- Have students help you come up with a set of standard rules. Make sure to be honest if the students come up with ideas that are not true. If they need help with this, watch a video of normal group conversations.
- Ideas for rules:
 - Stay on the current topic unless it is very closely related
 - Take the same number of conversational turns as everyone else
 - Talk for the same length of time as everyone else
 - Ask other people questions about the topic instead of only talking about yourself. Include those who haven't had a chance to talk yet
 - Listen to what others say and respond appropriately
 - Match the volume and emotion of the group, don't get too loud or too excited if no one else is
 - Wait until the other person is done talking before you jump in. Only speak when no one else is speaking

MS/HS Sample Cont.

Activity Three: Practice the Skill

- Tell students that you will be giving them a topic to talk about. Instruct them on how to respectfully point out if someone violates a rule of conversation.
- Introduce the topic and give one person the role of starting the conversation.
- Let the conversation continue but stop everyone when you see a rule violation. Point it out and ask the group at large what would have been a better way to do it.
- If you notice other problems that didn't come up in the rules, pause and add a new rule to the list

MS/HS Sample Cont.

Activity Four: Assign Homework

- Give each student a notebook and tell them to write an entry before the next session about a group conversation that they were a part of. Have them write how they followed the rules of group conversations or if they struggled with any rules.

Activity Five: Review Homework

- At the beginning of the next session, review how the homework went and see if you need to revise the rules or add to them based on the children's experiences. Continue to work on that skill in the same way until mastery is achieved (or close to it).

References:

- How to Teach Social Skills (PBIS World)
<http://www.pbisworld.com/tier-2/teach-social-skills/>
- Group Therapy Ideas from a Psychologist:
<http://www.elementaryschoolcounseling.org/small-group-counseling.html>
- Social Skills for Teens:
<http://socialskillscentral.com/category/social-skills-for-teens/>