

Social-Emotional Learning Toolkit

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Why Social-Emotional Skills Matter

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is often the most important factor in kindergarten readiness. Children who can identify and manage their emotions, get along with others, and handle challenges are better prepared for school success. These skills affect everything from making friends to following classroom rules to persisting through difficult tasks.

Tip: SEL skills are learned through practice, modeling, and lots of patience. Progress may be slow, but it's happening!

The Five SEL Competencies

Self-Awareness

Recognizing emotions and strengths

Self-Management

Regulating emotions and behaviors

Social Awareness

Understanding others' perspectives

Relationships

Building positive connections

Decision-Making

Making responsible choices

1

Feelings Check-In

Emotional Awareness

5-10 min

Materials:

- Feelings chart or cards (included below)
- Mirror (optional)

How to Do It:

1. Show your child a feelings chart with emotion faces
2. Ask "How are you feeling right now?"
3. Have them point to or name their emotion
4. Ask "What made you feel that way?"
5. Validate their feeling: "It's okay to feel [emotion]"

☆ Do this daily at the same time (morning, after school) to build emotional vocabulary.

Awareness

2

Calm Down Corner

Self-Regulation

15 min setup, ongoing use

Materials:

- Cozy spot with pillow/blanket
- Calming items (stuffed animal, stress ball)
- Calm-down strategy cards

How to Do It:

1. Create a designated calm-down space together
2. Add comforting items your child chooses
3. Practice using it when calm (not just when upset)
4. Teach calming strategies: deep breaths, counting, squeezing
5. Let child go there independently when overwhelmed

☆ *This is not a punishment spot—it's a tool for self-regulation.*

Regulation

3

Belly Breathing Practice

Calming Techniques

5 min

Materials:

- Small stuffed animal or toy
- Comfortable place to lie down

How to Do It:

1. Have child lie down and place toy on their belly
2. Explain: "We're going to make the toy go up and down"
3. Breathe in slowly through nose—watch toy rise
4. Breathe out slowly through mouth—watch toy fall
5. Practice 5-10 breaths, making it slower each time

☆ *Practice when calm so it becomes automatic when upset.*

Regulation

4

Emotion Charades

Reading Social Cues

15-20 min

Materials:

- Emotion cards or list
- Timer (optional)

How to Do It:

1. Take turns acting out emotions without words
2. Use facial expressions and body language only
3. Others guess which emotion is being shown
4. Discuss: "How did you know they were feeling [emotion]?"
5. Talk about what bodies look like with different feelings

☆ *This builds the skill of reading others' emotions—crucial for social success.*

Social

5

Turn-Taking Games

Social Skills & Patience

15-20 min

Materials:

- Simple board game or card game
- Timer or sand timer

How to Do It:

1. Choose a game that requires taking turns
2. Use a visual timer so child can see when their turn comes
3. Model waiting patiently and cheering for others
4. Practice phrases: "Your turn!" "Good job!" "I'll wait"
5. Celebrate successful turn-taking, not just winning

☆ *Start with 2 players and short games, then build up.*

Social

6

Kindness Challenge

Empathy & Prosocial Behavior

10 min daily

Materials:

- Kindness tracker chart (included below)
- Stickers or stamps

How to Do It:

1. Each day, challenge your child to do one kind act
2. Examples: share a toy, help with a task, give a compliment
3. At day's end, discuss: "What kind thing did you do today?"
4. Record it on the kindness tracker
5. Notice and praise kindness you observe

☆ *Catch them being kind! Specific praise reinforces the behavior.*

Empathy

7

Problem-Solving Steps

Conflict Resolution

10-15 min

Materials:

- Problem-solving poster (included below)
- Puppets or toys (optional)

How to Do It:

1. Teach the steps: Stop, Think, Choose, Do
2. Stop: Take a breath, calm your body
3. Think: What's the problem? What are my choices?
4. Choose: Pick the best solution
5. Do: Try it! Did it work?

☆ *Practice with pretend scenarios before real conflicts arise.*

Problem-Solving

8

Feelings Stories

Emotional Understanding

15-20 min

Materials:

- Picture books about emotions
- Drawing supplies

How to Do It:

1. Read a story where characters experience emotions
2. Pause and ask: "How is [character] feeling? How do you know?"
3. Discuss: "Have you ever felt that way?"
4. Talk about what the character could do
5. Draw a picture of a time you felt that emotion

☆ Great books: "The Color Monster," "In My Heart," "When Sophie Gets Angry"

Awareness

9

Friendship Role-Play

Social Skills Practice

15 min

Materials:

- Puppets, dolls, or stuffed animals
- Scenario cards (optional)

How to Do It:

1. Use toys to act out common social situations
2. Scenarios: asking to play, handling rejection, sharing
3. Model positive responses, then let child try
4. Practice phrases: "Can I play too?" "Maybe next time"
5. Discuss: "What could you do if this really happened?"

☆ Role-play gives children scripts for real social situations.

Social

10

Gratitude Practice

Positive Mindset

5-10 min

Materials:

- Gratitude journal or jar
- Paper and crayons

How to Do It:

1. At bedtime or dinner, share gratitudes
2. Ask: "What are 3 good things from today?"
3. Write or draw them in a gratitude journal
4. Or write on slips and add to a gratitude jar
5. Read past gratitudes when having a hard day

☆ Gratitude practice is linked to greater happiness and resilience.

Mindset

Feelings Chart

Point to how you're feeling. It's okay to feel any of these!



Happy



Sad



Angry



Scared



Worried



Excited



Frustrated



Calm



Surprised



Proud



Lonely



Silly

Problem-Solving Steps

1. STOP

Take a breath. Calm your body.

2. THINK

What's the problem?
What can I do?

3. CHOOSE

Pick the best idea.

4. DO

Try it! Did it work?

Kindness Tracker

Color a heart each time you do something kind!



Social-Emotional Skills Checklist

Emotional Skills

- ☐ Names basic emotions (happy, sad, angry, scared)
- ☐ Recognizes emotions in others
- ☐ Uses calming strategies when upset
- ☐ Expresses feelings with words

Social Skills

- ☐ Takes turns and shares
- ☐ Plays cooperatively with others
- ☐ Uses polite words (please, thank you)
- ☐ Handles small conflicts independently

Notes & Observations