



# How To Talk With Friends: A Step-by-Step Social Skills Curriculum for Children With Autism

*Janine Toole PhD*

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This hands-on guide provides everything you need to run a successful social skills group or one-to-one intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Aspergers or similar social/language challenges.

Making friends and maintaining friendships is a struggle for these learners. The **How to Talk with Friends** curriculum teaches 8 to 12-year-old learners the key skills they need to talk and engage with their peers.

Students learn how to:

- Begin a conversation by asking about their friend's interests.
- Respond to a friend with appropriate comments, follow-up questions and follow-up comments.
- Track the movement of a conversation topic and avoid getting stuck on his/her own special interest topic.
- Appropriately change a topic during a conversation without dropping it in like a bomb.
- Signal interest with eye contact and body orientation and also interpret a friend's face/body messages.
- Begin and end a conversation smoothly.

Children learn and practice these skills while playing games, doing crafts and hanging out with their friends. The focus is on extended practice to ensure mastery.

The manual is organized into two parts. Part 1 provides the background information you need to run a successful social skills group or one-to-one intervention. Individual chapters cover the course content and structure, course preparation, and course delivery and assessment.

Part 2 contains the twelve weekly lessons. Each lesson provides step-by-step instructions for pre-session preparation, session delivery and assessment, and parent communication. The social skills lesson is scripted to ensure high-quality delivery even with inexperienced 'coaches'. All materials for delivering the course are contained in the Appendices. Children with ASD can learn to engage with peers. This curriculum is the guide you need to ensure their success.

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