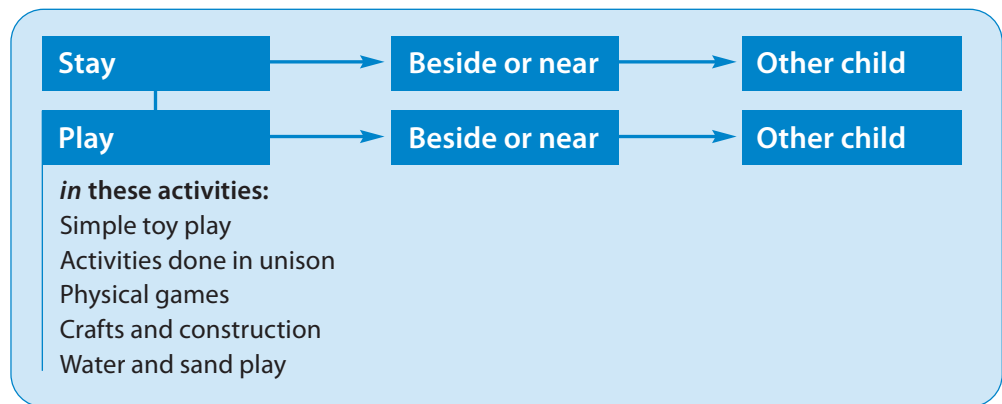


If your child already shows an interest in what other children are doing, then he's probably ready to start moving toward the next stage. That means, first, playing beside other children and sharing toys. They're not really playing together just yet, but it's a good start. (For example, they each build their own tower using blocks from the same box or move their own trains back and forth on the same set of tracks.)

Then your child will be ready to join in some play with one or two other children. Activities that the children can do in unison, like singing songs or moving to music with one another, help build friendships at this stage. When you notice the children exchanging glances and smiles, you'll know they're starting to connect. Other activities your child may start to enjoy at this stage include sharing physical activities (such as chase or running after a soccer ball).

These kinds of play will help lead your child to the next stage. In the beginning, though, the goals for a child with no social play skills are to **stay and play beside another child** (or other children). Playing briefly beside another child—or even just being in the same room—is the first step. To summarize...



Don't expect your child to stay with another child throughout the entire play date. In the beginning, he might join his friend for one or two activities out of five. Consider it a bonus if the children talk to one another.

Some social play skills

If you wrote in the Social Play Skills Quiz that your child **often**...

- > Plays beside another child or a group of children, using the same toys as them (#3) or
- > Joins in physical play with another child or a group (#4)

or **sometimes**...

- > Initiates play with another child or a group by joining in with their activities (#9)

... then your child is already starting to make friends. Playing alongside another child is a good stepping stone to playing together. Your child is learning what to do by watching others play.