



# Social Skills for Children with a Disability: Topic Guide

Children with a disability often experience difficulties in socialising with other children and adults. This can be due to physical, learning, behaviour and communication challenges. Generally, children with a disability are less likely to socialise with other people (apart from other children with a disability) and are more likely to experience social isolation.

By learning more about the challenges facing children with a disability to develop social skills, it may help you to understand your own child's behaviour and the difficulties they are experiencing in different social situations. You will also gain information about what you (and other people who care for your child) can do to help your child develop their social skills.

This 'topic guide' factsheet suggests a number of useful online resources that contain information and practical advice about strategies that can be used to further develop your child socially. There is also information about where you can seek further information or help. Some are specific to a particular disability, such as autism, while others are more generally targeted to children with a disability. A brief summary of each is provided.

## Novita Children's Services

Novita Children's Services (SA) produces a range of factsheets on dealing with difficulties that your child with a physical disability may experience. They can all be found at [www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=56](http://www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=56)

The following is a brief summary of the factsheets related to developing social skills.

### Social Skills

[www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=95](http://www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=95)

This factsheet outlines specific difficulties experienced by children with a physical disability in picking up spoken and unspoken 'signals' from other people. This may be because they have challenges in learning, or it could be because of the type of their disability. These signals must be understood to be able to learn social skills.

The factsheet describes a social skills training program called 'STOP,THINK,DO', which used traffic lights to show the steps for children trying to get along together.

- **Stop** (red) means stop reacting automatically and using bad habits
- **Think** (yellow) means think about the choices you have to solve the problem and the likely results of these choices
- **Do** (green) means choose the behaviour with the best result and do it confidently.

There is also information about additional helpful resources.

Related Novita factsheet links include:

- **Confidence and independence** [www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=84](http://www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=84)
- **Bullying** [www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=447](http://www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=447)
- **Play** [www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=72](http://www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=72)
- **Friendships** [www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=87](http://www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=87)



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## The Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology, Monash University

[www.med.monash.edu.au/spppm/research/devpsych/actnow/download/factsheet33.pdf](http://www.med.monash.edu.au/spppm/research/devpsych/actnow/download/factsheet33.pdf)

### Developing Social Skills ACT-NOW (Autism Consultation and Training Now)

This factsheet focuses on developing social skills for children with high functioning autism in the pre school environment and incorporates:

- Skills required to join in a play situation
- How do I teach 'joining skills'?
- Sustaining appropriate play
- Finishing a social play activity appropriately.

## CHERI (Children's Hospital Education Research Institute) at Westmead

[www.cheri.com.au/documents/Socialskillstrainingandenhancementforchildrenandadolescentswithdevelopmentaldisorders.pdf](http://www.cheri.com.au/documents/Socialskillstrainingandenhancementforchildrenandadolescentswithdevelopmentaldisorders.pdf)

### Social Skills training and enhancement for children and adolescents with developmental disorders

This factsheet is about social skills programs and how they can assist children with a disability to learn important social skills. These skills include greeting people, initiating contact, having a conversation and play skills.

The factsheet outlines:

- Use of 'buddy' systems in school and at home to encourage support and help from other children towards your child, rather than ridicule or bullying. A set of simple rules is provided for parents to develop a 'buddy' system at home, when inviting one or two children over to play with their child.
- Social stories - as a way of developing social skills that your child can use in different social situations. Your child can read and practise rules, ways of behaving and talking to other children and adults, to help prepare for new or difficult social situations. (There is a related factsheet 'What are social stories?' that you can find at [www.cheri.com.au/documents/Whataresocialstories.pdf](http://www.cheri.com.au/documents/Whataresocialstories.pdf) )

## Fraser Child and Family Center - Minneapolis

[www.fraser.org/tip\\_sheets/index.htm](http://www.fraser.org/tip_sheets/index.htm)

### Enhancing Social Interactions in Children with Autism

This factsheet outlines areas that can be challenging in relation to social development and suggests ideas for encouraging positive socialising between children with autism and other children. This will help to increase your child's ability to look to others for assistance, and learn the skills involved in playing well with other children.

## Raising Children Network

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disabilities\\_play\\_and\\_friendship.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disabilities_play_and_friendship.html)

This website contains a number of very practical factsheets on the following topics

- **Benefits of friendship and play**

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disabilities\\_play\\_and\\_friendship.html#benefit](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disabilities_play_and_friendship.html#benefit)

- **Challenges for children with disabilities**

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disabilities\\_play\\_and\\_friendship.html#Challenges](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disabilities_play_and_friendship.html#Challenges)

- **Helping your child learn to play and make friends**

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disabilities\\_play\\_and\\_friendship.html#helping](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/disabilities_play_and_friendship.html#helping)

