

Early Interactive Play

- Autistic children sometimes prefer to focus on non-social, sensory, physical and material things rather than social interaction. They may prefer to be solitary and/or to use their own interaction style, others may want to join in shared play with peers but find it difficult to know how to do this.
- Opportunities could be provided for your child to take part in play activities and small group work focussing on early interaction skills and building and maintaining friendships.
- Your child may benefit from support to explore engagement with others gradually and help other children to engage with them.
- Games to develop your child's ability to take turns with adult guidance and support.
- Opportunities for your child to develop friendships in safe, structured environments and situations, e.g. circle time, organized and supervised activities.
- Opportunities to develop successful communication with other children. Encourage simple supported games which your child has practiced with adults or siblings. Use commentary to encourage your child to consider the other child's feelings whilst also validating the child's own feelings e.g. 'I know you love this toy and want to play with it. I think X is sad because they wanted the toy too'
- Create simple play routines: people games are play routines that involve just you and your child. Simple games that follow specific steps, the same order, are regularly repeated and you both have specific roles. This will help your child become familiar with the play routine and repeat or request it. Good examples are nursery rhymes/action songs, such as 'row, row, row the boat' or 'round and round the garden'. Repeat these and pause before the final scream or tickle parts – does your child show anticipation of what's coming or try to join in the actions? You could also try physical play games, tickling and peepo.
- Join in and Play: if your child doesn't start an interaction with you; join in and play with them. If they are pushing a car back and forth, get down on the floor with your own car and drive it near them, making car noises. Also see section on 'intensive interaction'.