

THE SAFE-ZONE

Ten Ways You Can Help Your Child Make Friends at School

Don't push or panic

Not all children are social butterflies. Some like to take their time, watching the scene before getting involved. Also, there are kids who will only ever have one or two close friends, while others will have a wider circle of friendship.

Support extracurricular activities

By joining clubs or teams, your child can meet others who share the same interests. It's easier to connect when you have something to talk about.

Put food in their lunch-box that's easy to share.

If she has a problem making the first move, sharing something from a lunchbox can be a great icebreaker.

Make your home welcoming

Welcome visiting children into your home. When your son or daughter is able to invite new friends home, it's easier for them to develop a relationship away from the crowded classroom and schoolyard.

Organize social events

Birthday parties and sleepovers are a great way to cement blossoming friendships.

Be a driver

Whether it's carpooling with another parent for swimming lessons or volunteering to drive on school outings, this will provide another opportunity to bring your child together with others.

Listen

If your child is having problems making friends at school, listen to her concerns without jumping in immediately with solutions. Sometimes all she needs is a chance to talk.

Problem-solve with your child.

If he needs more than a chance to talk, help him develop a plan. Ask him, "What do you think would happen if you sat beside the other boys at lunchtime?" Or, "What could you say? Then practice with him.

Observe your child

Does she have any behaviors that may be causing a problem? Is she too bossy or extremely shy? If so, help her to recognize the problem and develop alternate behaviors.

Recruit the teacher

Talk to your child's teacher about what she observes. Is there a classmate who would make a good match with your child? Ask her to pair them up on a project.

Of course, you may discover that she's doing just fine at school and just hasn't told you about her school social life.