Having Successful Play Dates

A “play date” is a wonderful time for your child to make new friends and practice important social or friendship skills. Play dates can happen at your house, at the other child’s home, or in a public place, such as a park or library. Here are some tips for making your play dates successful and fun for you and your child:

- **Keep play dates small.** Invite one or two children to your house. Your child should already know the children, and they should be about the same age.

- **Keep play dates short.** In the beginning, one hour is good for young children, while older children can play for two hours or longer. This might mean that the play date could end while the children are busy playing and having fun, but it’s better than having the play date go on too long.

- **Plan ahead.** Plan the play date around games and activities that your child enjoys and is good at. This will make her more comfortable and help her to feel good about herself.

- **Get involved.** Your participation in the play date will help the children feel comfortable. And, you can keep them interested in playing, change the activity, or help resolve arguments, if needed. However, try not to control the play date.

- **See how others do it.** Watching videos or reading books about friends and friendship can help children learn how to make and be a friend. They can also be a starting point for talking with your child about making friends.

- **Try not to expect too much.** If your child is shy or insecure around other children, don’t pressure your child to have a play date. Perhaps a visit to the park or the library will give your child an opportunity to see and interact with other children informally.

Parents also make great play dates! Take time to play with your child. This helps you get to know your child’s playing style and builds a good relationship with your child. When choosing an activity, make several suggestions, but let your child pick what she wants to play.

Since children pay close attention to what grown-ups do, be sure to model or show your child the way to play with others. And, let your child see you interacting with family and friends, meeting new people, and always using good friendship skills.
Book Suggestions: