

SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR COMMON PLAYGROUND BEHAVIOURS

The playground is often an extremely confusing environment for children on the spectrum. Playgrounds can be overwhelming in many ways; socially, sensorially and behaviourally. Children with ASD, ADHD, ODD often desperately **want friends and to play with other children** but don't have the skills required. This can result in them getting in trouble for behaviour, becoming socially isolated, bullied or unable to maintain friendships. To overcome this, **it is important schools implement proactive strategies to support students to engage appropriately in the playground.**

These can include:

- ✔ Using social scripts ([download how to write and use social scripts here](#))
- ✔ Setting up playground clubs and activities
- ✔ Having support staff teach students how to interact and engage appropriately with their peers
- ✔ Teaching students how to manage their emotions ([see emotional regulation page 10](#))
- ✔ Setting up a passive playground or quiet area in your playground ([Range of ideas in my Developing Social Skills book](#))



Below are a number of common playground behaviours and suggested strategies to make a difference for the kids you know. Many of these strategies are from my Developing Social Skills book which is a great time saver with ready made social scripts and activities for the individual student or whole class. See page references in the table for where to find in the book.

BEHAVIOUR	REASON WHY THEY MIGHT DO THIS	SUGGESTED STRATEGIES
Too aggressive with other students	Often children with ASD don't realise how forceful they are being and are unknowingly hurting other students.	Set ground rules for physical aggression, so the child knows consequences ahead of time. Encourage the use of words to communicate feelings. Practice different types of touch e.g. In a game of Tag - how to tag another child with a soft touch rather than hitting
Difficulty winning or losing	Many children with ASD have trouble regulating their emotions, they may feel extreme happiness after winning or get very upset after a loss	Remind the child that playground games are just games and it's okay to feel good about winning, but it is okay to lose too. Try to teach phrases which encourage good sportsmanship! <i>See pg 66-68 for activities on being a good sport</i>
Not taking turns	Understanding social cues and processing information can be hard for children with learning and processing difficulties this can lead to children struggling with 'turntaking.'	Model taking turns and sharing. Practice language such as "my turn" and "your turn". <i>See pg 44-45 'Waiting for my turn'</i>

BEHAVIOUR	REASON WHY THEY MIGHT DO THIS	SUGGESTED STRATEGIES
Wanting to play with other students but unsure how to join in	Playground time involves social skills which can be a source of stress for children with ASD.	Practice social scripts for what to say to other kids e.g. "Hi, My name is ... What's yours? Or "Do you want to play on the swings with me?". See pg 59-63 'Can I play please?'
Taking risks on playground equipment	Children with sensory processing issues do not feel pain as strongly as others. This can result in risky behaviour.	Visit the playground without other children and run through appropriate use of equipment. Take photos or videos of them using equipment and make into social scripts
Stalking other students	This is usually because they want to be friends but do not know how to connect socially	Consider introducing lunch clubs so they have somewhere to go and something to do. Be cautious if you stop them following one student as they normally replace with another student

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

By Sue Larkey and Gay von Ess

A starting point for teaching and encouraging social interactions and skills for children with an autism spectrum disorder and other developmental delays. It is a useful concrete and visual resource which when coupled with videoing, role playing and modeling will help young primary school age children with an autism spectrum disorder to better understand the social world around them. This book includes hundreds of ideas, social stories and worksheets. It is a great resource full of time savers for home and school.

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