

How to use Puppets to Role-play.

It is simple really. You need an idea and some hand puppets to start with. You can use your puppet and a different voice to talk directly to your child, or if you have two puppets, they can talk to each other and role-play different social situations. Use your imagination and role-play situations that are relevant to your child's social development and stage. If they are starting prep or kindergarten for example, you might role-play two puppets first day in the playground and how they introduce themselves to each other.

Ways to teach Social skills.

1. **Managing big emotions.** Use your puppets to role-play situations that evoke big emotions and provide examples of how the puppets manages these. This can be calm down strategies, breathing techniques, working things out, moving away from the situation and thinking about it, negotiating with others or asking for help.
2. **Conversation starters.** When children are in the early beginnings of social confidence it is the small things that need initial attention. Simple things such as introducing themselves to others, approaching someone in the playground and asking if they would like to play, starting conversations with new friends and asking about shared interests.
3. **Listening Skills.** Through the use of puppets you can teach turn taking in conversation and emphasis on the skill of listening. Paraphrase things back to them so they know you are listening or make it obvious by getting the puppet to nod its head and say "I am listening"
4. **Being Kind to others.** Kindness can be role played by using the puppet to give compliments, offer its help and ask if they need help, the puppet could share a toy and just be generally friendly. Role playing being kind to others is also easy with the puppets; By introducing other siblings, puppets or toys you can role play inclusion and asking others to join in, asking if others need help, giving others compliments and speaking about others in a kind way.
5. **Appropriate social skills.** Appropriate social skills are general skills that help in every day interactions such as asking and answering questions, speaking respectfully and in the correct tone, using manners, disagreeing with an idea respectfully and not disagreeing with the person. An important social skill to teach is eye contact. For example, the puppet could say "when I talk to people I look at their eye colour" and move over in front of the child's eyes, "you have blue eyes".
6. **Empathy.** The ability to acknowledge and identify emotions in others. Through role play the puppet can use descriptive language to talk about emotions, how they would feel in hypothetical situations and ask the child questions that encourage them to explain their own emotions. With two hand puppets you could role play a situation where the puppets could identify their own emotions. "puppet A got upset that I said that, I didn't mean to hurt his feelings. I think I should apologise"
7. **Resilience.** Role playing negative situations that they may encounter should be thought about because often bullying is inevitable and there will be a time where a child experiences an unpleasant social interaction. Not only that, all children are not friends and don't have to be. You can role-play situations where a puppet says something along the lines of "no I don't want play with you" and the

other accepts it, “ok that is fine, I will find someone else to play with” or “that’s alright”. You can also role-play the puppets using positive self-talk to cope with situations like this and how they use problem solving skills.