



# WHERE TO BEGIN IN SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAMMES

There are four key skills that students need to be taught and reviewed through different ages and stages.

1. Imitate and attend to tasks/people
2. Wait
3. Ask for help
4. Request a turn.

Many students may need visuals or alternative communication systems to support teaching these skills. You can use picture symbols, signing, photos and more.

## 1. IMITATION & ATTENDING TO PEOPLE/TASKS

To play a game or interact in a conversation with another person you need to learn imitation skills. This means being aware of what other people are doing and copy them. For example if everyone is sitting, you need to sit as well. If everyone is using a LOUD voice you would do that. If everyone is playing trains you need to get a train.

### Successful Strategies

- ✓ Introduce the term LOOK and encourage students to look at activities.
- ✓ Catch them looking and reinforce with the term *"Good Looking"*.
- ✓ Start with activities highly motivating to encourage them to give attention.
- ✓ Encourage them to notice what other people are doing/saying (actually teach, point out).

(People with an autism spectrum disorder have particular difficulty with eye contact. It is recommended you start with looking at objects and using the task as the focus).

## 2. WAIT

Examples of different types of waiting to teach:

- To wait for a turn in a game or conversation.
- To wait for a turn by putting your hand up.
- To wait for a turn in a line (canteen, games).
- To wait for a turn by looking in another person's direction.

WAIT

### Successful Strategies

- ✓ When waiting for a turn count: *1,2,3,4,5...now it is James turn.*
- ✓ Give the student something to hold whilst they are waiting. Note: this may be something they like eg. toy car sensory toy, timer etc.
- ✓ Above is an example of a **WAIT** symbol. Copy, cut out and laminate for student to hold. Copy on RED, as waiting actually means STOP!

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### 3. HELP

Here are a few ways 'help' is included in social skills:

Can they ask for "help", or do they walk away, drag people, do everything themselves?

**Help** "I don't understand the game" or "I don't understand what to do or play".

**Help** Putting hand up rather than calling out or sitting doing nothing.

**Help** "Can I play with you", "Can you help me build with the blocks".

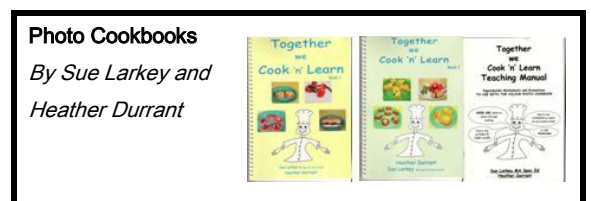
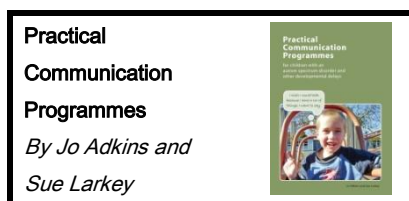
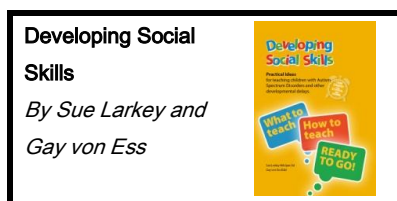
### 4. Requesting a turn

This may be tapping the adult, putting hand up or asking using a visual communication system.

- ✓ You may need to model this (ie. Put your hand up as a reminder).
- ✓ When the student requests, reinforce by responding quickly.
- ✓ For some students just a brief glance at first may be their way of requesting. Say "You want a ..... (turn)" and give to them.
- ✓ Use photos/names of students to indicate whose turn. Have a visual to indicate turn (*see Practical Communication Programmes for examples of turn taking visuals*).

Cooking is a great way to teach social skills. The above is adapted from the "Cookbook Manual". Cooking is a great place to start for social skills at home and school. Just think of all the imitation, attending to task, turn taking, waiting, asking for help and requesting that can be incorporated easily in a cooking activity. Many schools use cooking activities as their social skills programme, there is never a lack of enthusiastic students to come to a cooking activity!

Recommended Resources (available online at [www.suelarkey.com](http://www.suelarkey.com)):



For more tip sheets, to sign up for a free newsletter or request a free catalogue visit:

[www.suelarkey.com](http://www.suelarkey.com)