



**FIRSTPATH**  
AUTISM



Lesson Guide  
25. Parallel Play

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# Overview

<p>Teaches:</p>	<p>Parallel play teaches the child how to play and behave appropriately when playing alongside, or in close physical proximity to, a peer. Parallel play does not require the child to directly interact with the peer; rather, it can be considered a sort of "middle step" between independent play and interactive play. Parallel play helps the child begin to tolerate the presence of a peer in his play area, as well as skills associated with more than one child playing in the same area: examples include asking for a turn, sharing when requested to do so, visually observing peer's actions, cleaning up toys when finished.</p>
<p>Before beginning:</p>	<p>The child should be exhibiting skills in the areas of Independent Play, Basic Asking/Requesting Skills, Following Instructions, Imitating Speech, and Imitating Actions in order to be successful with this lesson.</p>
<p>Why it's important:</p>	<p>This lesson helps build social and interactive skills, which facilitate making friends, attending play dates, parties, and other socially appropriate recreation, participating in community.</p>
<p>Materials needed:</p>	<p>Various toys/activities, available peer.</p>
<p>Generalization activities:</p>	<p>Playing at the park and other community locations, participating in school recess, birthday parties, family events, etc.</p>



# Steps

## Prepare

1. Locate an age-appropriate, typically developing peer who generally exhibits behavior that is desirable for the child to model (e.g., generally responsive to adult instruction, shares, speaks kindly, does not engage in aggressive behavior, etc.).
2. Schedule a short time (i.e., 20-30 minutes maximum) for the peer and child to play.
3. Initially, it is preferred for the environment to be one that is familiar to the child and comfortable for the child (e.g., their own home; possibly even their own preschool classroom or neighborhood park may be utilized). It is also preferable that the initial environment would not be noisy or presenting with many distractions.
4. Have several highly preferred items ready and available to function as reinforcers for desired / correct responses.
5. Have data collection ready.
6. Have lesson materials prepared and available. For this lesson, materials consist of a variety of toys and age-appropriate activities that do not require interaction between the children.
7. Make sure the child is ready to attend.
8. Teacher should give the child a brief preparation of what to expect for the play session (via spoken explanation, pictures, or social story). For example, "We are going to play with a friend today. I will help you to play nicely."

## Teach

**NOTE:** Teaching in this lesson mostly takes the form of setting up the situation, then sitting back and prompting or redirecting only when necessary to help the child achieve the target skill(s). There should not be constant, active instruction taking place in this lesson.

1. Help the child welcome his peer by saying something simple like, "Hi!"
2. Show the child and peer the play area and the available toys/activities.
3. Tell the child and the peer to go ahead and choose something to play with. The child and peer do not have to choose the same thing; in fact, for parallel play skills, it is preferable that they choose different toys initially.
4. Allow child and peer to play with their chosen activities, providing prompts only when needed for target skills, or when the child or peer exhibits behavior that requires correction.
5. Provide feedback as needed, via social praise when the child or peer is exhibiting ones of the target skills; or via correction when the child or peer engages in inappropriate behavior.



**NOTE:** The teacher's attention to the behavior of the peer (in addition to the child) is important in this lesson, because the child is being encouraged to watch what the peer is doing. Praising the peer for desired behavior will help model for the child what kinds of behavior are reinforced.)

*Examples include:*

Correct response	Incorrect response
<p>Child and peer playing with their own activities in same room, 3 feet apart.</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "Nice playing on the floor, Johnny", and, "Nice playing on the floor, Pedro."</p>	<p><u>Peer:</u> "Can I have that book?" (child is looking at book)</p> <p><u>Child:</u> (holds book away from peer)</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "You can say, 'Please wait.'"</p> <p><u>Child:</u> "Please wait."</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "Good using your words!"</p>
<p>Child is watching peer play with trucks.</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "Good looking at your friend! He is playing with trucks!"</p>	<p>(Child allowed to look for a couple more minutes before sharing with peer.)</p>
<p>Child and peer have been playing nicely for 10 minutes. Two minutes before, teacher had given warning that it was almost time to clean up.</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "It is time to clean up the toys."</p> <p><u>Peer:</u> "Okay!" (and begins cleaning up)</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "Good job, Pedro!"</p> <p><u>Child:</u> (begins cleaning up)</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "Horray for Johnny! Good cleaning!"</p>	<p>Child sees toy that peer has, approaches peer, grabs the toy away from peer. Peer screams.</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "Uh-oh! If you want a toy, you need to ask nicely. Let's try again." (helps child give toy back to peer)</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "Now say, 'Can I have a turn please?'"</p> <p><u>Child:</u> "Can I have a turn, please?"</p> <p>(Peer hands toy to child)</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "Say, 'Thank you.' "</p> <p><u>Child:</u> "Thank you."</p> <p><u>Teacher:</u> "Good job!"</p>



## TYPICAL ORDER OF LEARNING TARGETS

The order of these targets may vary; in addition, most will be taught simultaneously. Targets can also be added to this list as applicable to the child's needs.

1. Tolerating a peer being physically present, within 2-3 feet of child
2. Tolerating a peer playing with child's own toys
3. Playing with own toys appropriately and according to function while in peer's presence
4. Remaining in the play area (i.e., no running off)
5. Appropriately responding to peer's request for a turn / to share toy in child's possession  
(\*appropriate responses include: "Yes" while handing toy over, or "Please wait" / "Just a minute" and handing toy over after a couple more minutes)
6. Asking for the peer to share / asking for a turn with a toy in the peer's possession
7. Looking at peer for brief durations (beginning with 2-3 seconds) to observe what peer is doing
8. Spontaneously imitating peer's actions
9. Follows teacher instruction to clean up toys
10. Parallel play with a small group of peers (2-3 peers)