



Autism Focused Intervention  
Resources & Modules

SST

## EBP BRIEF PACKET: SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute  
Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules  
Griffin, W., Sam, A., & AFIRM Team, 2025



The National Professional  
Development Center on Autism



FRANK PORTER GRAHAM  
CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



# OVERVIEW OF CONTENT

1. **Table of SST Contents:** This list details the specific SST resources that apply to Social Skills Training.
2. **What is SST:** A quick summary of salient features of Social Skills Training, including what it is, who it can be used with, what skills it has been used with, and settings for instruction.
3. **Evidence-base:** The evidence-base details the National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice (NCAEP) criteria for inclusion as an evidence-based practice and the specific studies that meet the criteria for Social Skills Training.
4. **Planning Checklist:** This checklist details the steps for planning for Social Skills Training, including what prerequisite learning of practices are needed, collecting baseline data of the interfering behavior if needed, and what materials/resources are needed.
5. **Other Resources:** Other resources may include decision trees, checklists, and/or template forms that will support the use of Social Skills Training.
6. **Step-by-Step Guide:** Use this guide as an outline for how to plan for, use, and monitor Social Skills Training. Each step includes a brief description as a helpful reminder while learning the process.
7. **Implementation Checklist:** Use this checklist to determine if Social Skills Training are being implemented as intended.
8. **Monitoring Progress Checklist:** Use this form as a method for collecting and analyzing data to determine if the learner on the spectrum is making progress towards the interfering behavior.
9. **Tip Sheet for Professionals:** Use this tip sheet, intended for professionals working with learners on the spectrum, as a supplemental resource to help provide basic information about Social Skills Training.
10. **Parent Guide:** Use this guide intended for parents or family members of learners on the spectrum to help them understand basic information about Social Skills Training and how it is being used with their child.
11. **Additional Resources:** This list provides additional information for learning more about Social Skills Training as well as resources.
12. **CEC Standards:** This list details the specific CEC standards that apply to Social Skills Training.
13. **Glossary:** This glossary contains key terms that apply specifically to Social Skills Training.
14. **References:** This list details the specific references used for developing this SST module in numerical order.



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# SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

## WHAT IS SST?

Social Skills Training (SST) is group or individual instruction designed to teach learners ways to participate in their interactions appropriately and successfully with others. SST sometimes may co-occur with peer-based instruction and intervention (PBII) or some related use of peer models or tutors to support practice of targeted skills.

## EVIDENCE-BASE:

Based upon the 2020 systematic review conducted by the National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice (NCAEP), social skills training is a focused intervention that meets the evidence-based practice criteria with 34 single case design and 40 group design studies. Social skills training has been effective for early intervention (0-2 years), preschoolers (3-5 years), elementary school learners (6-11 years), middle school learners (12-14 years), high schoolers (15-18 years), and young adults (19-22 years) on the spectrum. Studies included the 2020 EBP report (Steinbrenner et al., 2020) detail how social skills training can be used to effectively address the following outcomes for a target goal/behavior/skill: adaptive/self-help, behavior, cognitive, communication, mental health, play, school readiness, self-determination, and social.

## HOW IS SST BEING USED?

Social Skills Training can be used by a variety of professionals, including teachers, special educators, therapists, paraprofessionals, and early interventionists in educational and community-based environments. Parents and family members also can use Social Skills Training in the home.

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## EVIDENCE-BASE

The National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice has adopted the following criteria to determine if a practice is evidence-based. The 2020 EBP report (Steinbrenner et al., 2020) provides more information about the systematic review process.

Efficacy must be established through high-quality, peer-reviewed research in scientific journals using:

- At least 2 randomized or quasi-experimental group design studies, or
- At least 5 single subject/case design studies, or a
- Combination of evidence of 1 randomized or quasi-experimental group design study and 3 single subject/case design studies

### OVERVIEW:

Based upon the 2020 systematic review conducted by the National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice (NCAEP), social skills training is a focused intervention that meets the evidence-based practice criteria with 34 single case design and 40 group design studies. Social skills training has been effective for early intervention (0-2 years), preschoolers (3-5 years), elementary school learners (6-11 years), middle school learners (12-14 years), high schoolers (15-18 years), and young adults (19-22 years) on the spectrum. Studies included the 2020 EBP report (Steinbrenner et al., 2020) detail how social skills training can be used to effectively address the following outcomes for a target goal/behavior/skill: adaptive/self-help, behavior, cognitive, communication, mental health, play, school readiness, self-determination, and social.

In the table below, the instructional outcomes identified by the evidence base are shown by age of participants.

Age	Adaptive	Behavior	Cognitive	Communication	Mental Health	Play	School Readiness	Self-determination	Social
0-2				Yes		Yes			Yes
3-5		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes			Yes
6-11	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12-14	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
15-18	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes
19-22									Yes



## EARLY INTERVENTION (0-2 YEARS):

- \* Belchic, J. K., & Harris, S. L. (1994). The use of multiple peer exemplars to enhance the generalization of play skills to the siblings of children with autism. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*, 16(2), 1-25.  
[https://doi.org/10.1300/J019v16n02\\_01](https://doi.org/10.1300/J019v16n02_01)

## PRESCHOOL (3-5 YEARS):

- \* Belchic, J. K., & Harris, S. L. (1994). The use of multiple peer exemplars to enhance the generalization of play skills to the siblings of children with autism. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*, 16(2), 1-25.  
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## MIDDLE SCHOOL (12-14 YEARS):

- \* Baghdadli, A., Brisot, J., Henry, V., Michelon, C., Soussana, M., Rattaz, C., & Picot, M. C. (2013). Social skills improvement in children with high-functioning autism: A pilot randomized controlled trial. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 22(7), 433-42. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-013-0388-8>
- \* Bambara, L. M., Cole, C. L., Kunsch, C., Tsai, S. C., & Ayad, E. (2016). A peer-mediated intervention to improve the conversational skills of high school students with autism spectrum disorder. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 27, 29-43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2016.03.003>
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- \* Cheng, Y., Huang, C. L., & Yang, C. S. (2015). Using a 3D immersive virtual environment system to enhance social understanding and social skills for children with autism spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 30(4), 222-236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088357615583473>

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- \* Deckers, A., Muris, P., Roelofs, J., & Arntz, A. (2016). A group-administered social skills training for 8- to 12-year-old, high-functioning children with autism spectrum disorders: An evaluation of its effectiveness in a naturalistic outpatient treatment setting. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 46(11), 3493-3504. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-016-2887-1>
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- \* Freitag, C. M., Jensen, K., Elsuni, L., Sachse, M., Herpertz-Dahlmann, B., Schulte-Ruther, M., Hanig, S., Gontard, A., Poustka, L., Schach-Hansjosten, T., Wenzl, C., Sinzig, J., Taurines, R., Geissler, J., Kieser, M., & Cholemkery, H. (2016). Group-based cognitive behavioural psychotherapy for children and adolescents with ASD: The randomized, multicentre, controlled SOSTA - net trial. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 57(5), 596-605. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12509>
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- \* Schiltz, H. K., McVey, A. J., Dolan, B. K., Willar, K. S., Pleiss, Sheryl, K., Jeffrey S., Carson, A. M., Caiozzo, C., Vogt, E. M., Yund, B. D., & Hecke, A. V. (2017). Changes in depressive symptoms among adolescents with ASD completing the PEERS® social skills intervention. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48(3), 834-843. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-017-3396-6>
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- \* Schohl, K. A., Van Hecke, A. V., Carson, A. M., Dolan, B., Karst, J., & Stevens, S. (2014). A replication and extension of the PEERS intervention: Examining effects on social skills and social anxiety in adolescents with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(3), 532-45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-013-1900-1>
- \* Thomeer, M. L., Lopata, C., Donnelly, J. P., Booth, A., Shanahan, A., Federiconi, V., McDonald, C. A., & Rodgers, J. D. (2016). Community effectiveness RCT of a comprehensive psychosocial treatment for high-functioning children with ASD. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* 48(S1), S119-130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2016.1247359>
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- \* Vernon, T., Miller, A., Ko, J., Barrett, A., & McGarry, E. (2017). A randomized controlled trial of the social tools and rules for teens (start) program: An immersive socialization intervention for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48(3), 892-904. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-017-3380-1>
- \* Visser, K., Greaves-Lord, K., Tick, N. T., Verhulst, F. C., Maras, A., & van der Vegt, E. J. M. (2017). A randomized controlled trial to examine the effects of the tackling teenage psychosexual training program for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 58(7), 840-850. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12709>



- \* Waugh, C., & Peskin, J. (2015). Improving the social skills of children with HFASD: An intervention study. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45(9), 2961-2980. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-015-2459-9>
- \* White, S. W., Ollendick, T., Albano, A. M., Oswald, D., Johnson, C., Southam-Gerow, M. A., Kim, I., & Scahill, L. (2013). Randomized controlled trial: Multimodal anxiety and social skill intervention for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 43(2), 382-394. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-012-1577-x>
- \* Yoo, H. J., Bahn, G., Cho, I. H., Kim, E. K., Kim, J. H., Min, J. W., Lee, W. H., Seo, J. S., Jun, S. S., Bong, G., Cho, S., Shin, M. S., Kim, B. N., Kim, J. W., Park, S., & Laugeson, E. A. (2014). A randomized controlled trial of the Korean version of the PEERS parent-assisted social skills training program for teens with ASD. *Autism Research*, 7(1), 145-61. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.1354>

## HIGH SCHOOL (15-18 YEARS):

- \* Bambara, L. M., Cole, C. L., Kunsch, C., Tsai, S. C., & Ayad, E. (2016). A peer-mediated intervention to improve the conversational skills of high school students with autism spectrum disorder. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 27, 29-43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2016.03.003>
- \* Chung, U. S., Han, D. H., Shin, Y. J., & Renshaw, P. F. (2016). A prosocial online game for social cognition training in adolescents with high-functioning autism: An fMRI study. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, 12, 651-660. <https://doi.org/10.2147/ndt.s94669>
- \* Dolan, B., Hecke, A., Carson, A., Karst, J., Stevens, S., Schohl, K., Potts, S., Kahne, J., Linneman, N., Rummel, R., & Hummel, E. (2016). Brief report: Assessment of intervention effects on in vivo peer interactions in adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders*, 46(6), 2251-2259. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-016-2738-0>
- \* Freitag, C. M., Jensen, K., Elsuni, L., Sachse, M., Herpertz-Dahlmann, B., Schulte-Ruther, M., Hanig, S., Gontard, A., Poustka, L., Schad-Hansjosten, T., Wenzl, C., Sinzig, J., Taurines, R., Geissler, J., Kieser, M., & Cholemkery, H. (2016). Group-based cognitive behavioural psychotherapy for children and adolescents with ASD: The randomized, multicentre, controlled SOSTA - net trial. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 57(5), 596-605. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12509>
- \* Hood, S. A., Luczynski, K. C., & Mitteer, D. R. (2017). Toward meaningful outcomes in teaching conversation and greeting skills with individuals with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 50(3), 459-486. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaba.388>
- \* Laugeson, E. A., Frankel, F., Mogil, C., & Dillon, A. R. (2009). Parent-assisted social skills training to improve friendships in teens with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 39(4), 596-606. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-008-0664-5>
- \* Palmen, A., Didden, R., & Arts, M. (2008). Improving question asking in high-functioning adolescents with autism spectrum disorders: Effectiveness of small-group training. *Autism*, 12(1), 83-98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361307085265>
- \* Plavnick, J. B., Kaid, T., & MacFarland, M. C. (2015). Effects of a school-based social skills training program for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45(9), 2674-90. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-015-2434-5>
- \* Plavnick, J. B., Sam, A. M., Hume, K., & Odom, S. L. (2013). Effects of video-based group instruction for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Exceptional Children*, 80(1), 67-83.
- \* Schiltz, H. K., McVey, A. J., Dolan, B. K., Willar, K. S., Pleiss, Sheryl, K., Jeffrey S., Carson, A. M., Caiozzo, C., Vogt, E. M., Yund, B. D., & Hecke, A. V. (2017). Changes in depressive symptoms among adolescents with ASD completing the PEERS® social skills intervention. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48(3), 834-843. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-017-3396-6>
- \* Schohl, K. A., Van Hecke, A. V., Carson, A. M., Dolan, B., Karst, J., & Stevens, S. (2014). A replication and extension of the PEERS intervention: Examining effects on social skills and social anxiety in adolescents with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(3), 532-45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-013-1900-1>
- \* Vernon, T., Miller, A., Ko, J., Barrett, A., & McGarry, E. (2017). A randomized controlled trial of the social tools and rules for teens (start) program: An immersive socialization intervention for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48(3), 892-904. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-017-3380-1>



- \* Visser, K., Greaves-Lord, K., Tick, N. T., Verhulst, F. C., Maras, A., & van der Vegt, E. J. M. (2017). A randomized controlled trial to examine the effects of the tackling teenage psychosexual training program for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 58(7), 840-850. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12709>
- \* White, S. W., Ollendick, T., Albano, A. M., Oswald, D., Johnson, C., Southam-Gerow, M. A., Kim, I., & Scahill, L. (2013). Randomized controlled trial: Multimodal anxiety and social skill intervention for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 43(2), 382-394. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-012-1577-x>
- \* Yoo, H. J., Bahn, G., Cho, I. H., Kim, E. K., Kim, J. H., Min, J. W., Lee, W. H., Seo, J. S., Jun, S. S., Bong, G., Cho, S., Shin, M. S., Kim, B. N., Kim, J. W., Park, S., & Laugeson, E. A. (2014). A randomized controlled trial of the Korean version of the PEERS parent-assisted social skills training program for teens with ASD. *Autism Research*, 7(1), 145-61. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.1354>

## YOUNG ADULT (19-22 YEARS):

- \* Freitag, C.M., Jensen, K., Elsuni, L., Sachse, M., Herpertz-Dahlmann, B., Schulte-Ruther, M., Hanig, S., Gontard, A., Poustka, L., Schad-Hansjosten, T., Wenzl, C., Sinzig, J., Taurines, R., Geissler, J., Kieser, M., & Cholemkery, H. (2016). Group-based cognitive behavioural psychotherapy for children and adolescents with ASD: The randomized, multicentre, controlled SOSTA - net trial. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 57(5), 596-605. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12509>
- \* Palmen, A., Didden, R., & Arts, M. (2008). Improving question asking in high-functioning adolescents with autism spectrum disorders: Effectiveness of small-group training. *Autism*, 12(1), 83-98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361307085265>
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Notes: \* denotes the study has participants in at least two age ranges  
**Bold denotes new studies since 2011 (2012 till 2017)**



## SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- **Concept Mastery** - This instructional technique uses visual diagrams to teach social concepts, defining characteristics, and providing examples/non-examples while encouraging learner input.
- **Direct Instruction (DI)** - A systematic approach to teaching using a sequenced instructional package with scripted protocols or lessons. It emphasizes teacher and student dialogue through choral and independent student responses and employs systematic and explicit error corrections to promote mastery and generalization.
- **Facilitated Practice/Practice with Feedback** - Structured opportunities for learners to practice social skills with direct guidance and corrective feedback.
- **Modeling (MD)** - Demonstration of a desired target behavior that results in use of the behavior by the learner and that leads to the acquisition of the target behavior.
- **Peer-Based Instruction & Intervention (PBII)** - Intervention in which peers directly promote the learner's social interactions and/or other individual learning goals, or the teacher/ other adult organizes the social context (e.g., play groups, social network groups, recess) and when necessary, provides support (e.g., prompts, reinforcement) to the learner and their peer to engage in social interactions.
- **Prompting (PP)** - Verbal, gestural, or physical assistance given to learners to support them in acquiring or engaging in a targeted behavior or skill.
- **Reinforcement (R)** - The application of a consequence following a learner's use of a response or skills that increases the likelihood that the learner will use the response/skills in the future.
- **Role-play** - Involves acting out social scenarios in a structured environment to help learners practice appropriate responses and behaviors.
- **Social Narratives (SN)** - Interventions that describe social situations to highlight relevant features of a target behavior or skill and offer examples of appropriate responding.
- **Video Modeling (VM)** - A video-recorded demonstration of the targeted behavior or skill shown to the learner to assist learning in or engaging in a desired behavior or skill.
- **Visual Supports (VS)** - A visual display (e.g., visual cue, script) that supports the learner engaging in a desired behavior or skills independent of additional prompts.



## SESSION COMPONENTS

- 1. CHECK IN/WARM-UP:** Initially, this time will be used to make introductions. It might be helpful for members to pass an object around to indicate their turn to speak. Members can state their name and provide information about themselves if appropriate. At future sessions, this time can be used to discuss experiences in using the target social skill from the previous session.
- 2. INTRODUCTION OF NEW SKILL:** The adult leader of the group will introduce the new skill or topic of instruction for the session. The leader might also use this time to review skills from previous sessions.
- 3. MODELING:** The target skill should be modeled during the session. The leader, peers, group members, or video modeling can be used to model the target social skill. It might be helpful to have both good and bad examples of the target skill or behavior. These examples can be used for discussion and clarification of the target social skill. Be sure to have time for the learner or group members to ask questions for clarification. For more information, please refer to the Modeling module.
- 4. PRACTICE:** Role-plays can be used to provide opportunities for group members to practice using the target social skill. The group format provides a safe opportunity for members to practice the skill and receive feedback. Allow each member to practice the new skill several times during the session. If permission is granted, consider video recording members using the target social skill. Videos can then be viewed to discuss what the member did correctly and what might be improved in the future. The videos can also provide a video model for the member. For more information, please refer to the Video Modeling module.
- 5. FEEDBACK:** Often, this component is embedded within the practice component. The leader should provide correction when a skill is used incorrectly but also provide reinforcement when the skill is used correctly. For more information, please refer to the Reinforcement module.
- 6. GENERALIZATION:** Depending on the need of the members, time can be set aside during the lesson for the learners to practice generalizing the target social skill in a different environment (for example, general education classroom). The group leader might need to provide prompts for the learner to use the target social skill. In addition, the leader might need to assign homework or provide detailed instructions of expectations for members to practice the target social skill outside of the lesson. For more information, please refer to the Prompting module.





# PLANNING CHECKLIST

**Learner's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date/Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Observer(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Target Skill/Goal/Behavior:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Complete this checklist to determine which type of Social Skills Training to use with the learner on the spectrum as well as if SST is ready to be implemented.

## DETERMINE PARTICIPANT(S):

☐ Individual

☐ Group:

What grade level(s):

Needs of included learner:

☐ Include peer model?:

## CONDUCT SOCIAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT:

☐ Completion of skill inventories

☐ Interviews with family members or recent providers

☐ Observations

☐ Review of records and previous assessments

☐ Talking with the learner

☐ Use of formal assessment tools

## DETERMINE LESSONS:

What social skill will be addressed?

What underlying components of the social skill will need to be addressed?



## DETERMINE CURRICULUM:

- ☐ Packaged social skills curriculum
- ☐ Adapt lessons from packaged social skills curriculum
- ☐ Develop own content and lessons for sessions

## SELECT INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY/EBPS:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concept mastery                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Prompting (PP)         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Instruction (DI)                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Reinforcement (R)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitated practice                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Role-play              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modeling (MD)                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Narratives (SN) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peer-Based Instruction & Intervention (PBII) | <input type="checkbox"/> Video Modeling (VM)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice with feedback                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Supports (VS)   |

## DETERMINE MATERIALS:

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> TV/monitor/tablet (displaying videos)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Games      | <input type="checkbox"/> Specific materials required for each lesson |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Props      | <input type="checkbox"/> Video camera                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snacks     | <input type="checkbox"/> Videos                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toys       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                                      |

## SCHEDULE:

Instructor(s):

Where:

When/How long:



## PLANNING:

---

- ☐ Has the target goal/behavior/skill been identified?
- ☐ Is the target goal/behavior/skill measurable and observable? Does it clearly state **what** the target goal/behavior/skill is, **when** it will occur, and **how** team members/observers will know it has been mastered?
- ☐ Is Social Skills Training appropriate for the learner's target goal/behavior/skill?
- ☐ Have peers been trained?
- ☐ Has a data collection system been developed for the peer(s)?
- ☐ Does the peer know how to use their recording system?
- ☐ Have instructors/adults been trained?
- ☐ Does the learner require additional adaptations/modifications/supports? Such as a communication device or visual supports?
- ☐ Have reinforcers/rewards for the learner been identified based on the learner's interests/preferred items and/or activities?



# LESSON PLAN

**Learner's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date/Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Observer(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Target Skill/Goal/Behavior:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Use this form to develop a lesson plan for a Social Skills Training session.

Item	Training plan	Completion status	Changes/notes
Date		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Session topic		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Skills addressed		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Content		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Structure		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Behavior management		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Instructional strategies		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Materials needed		<input type="checkbox"/>	





Component	Length of Time	Description/Time
Check in/warm up		
Introduction of new skill		
Modeling		
Practice		
Feedback		
Generalization		



# DATA COLLECTION: FREQUENCY

**Learner's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date/Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Observer(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Target Goal/Behavior/Skill:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Collect data on the frequency of the learner demonstrating the target goal/behavior/skill to determine if the learner is making progress.

Time	Skill	Tally	Total Tally	Prompts Needed

**Prompt Key:** VB = Verbal; VS = Visual; G = Gestural; M = Model; P = Physical; I = No prompts needed/Independent

## ANECDOTAL NOTES:



# DATA COLLECTION: GROUP

Learner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Target Goal/Behavior/Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Collect data on multiple learners demonstrating their target goal/behavior/skill to determine if the learners are making progress.

Learner:																
Target Skill:																
Attempts		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Date:																
Date:																
Date:																
Date:																
Date:																
Summary Data: Unprompted	Day 1	# Unprompted					# Unprompted					# Unprompted				
		% Unprompted					% Unprompted					% Unprompted				
	Day 2	# Unprompted					# Unprompted					# Unprompted				
		% Unprompted					% Unprompted					% Unprompted				
	Day 3	# Unprompted					# Unprompted					# Unprompted				
		% Unprompted					% Unprompted					% Unprompted				
	Day 4	# Unprompted					# Unprompted					# Unprompted				
		% Unprompted					% Unprompted					% Unprompted				
	Day 5	# Unprompted					# Unprompted					# Unprompted				
		% Unprompted					% Unprompted					% Unprompted				

**Prompt Key:** VB = Verbal; VS = Visual; G = Gestural; M = Model; P = Physical

**Response Key:** + = No prompts needed/Independent; 0 = no response



# MONITORING PROGRESS CHECKLIST

**Learner's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date/Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Observer(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Target Skill/Goal/Behavior:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Complete this checklist to determine if the learner is making progress with using Social Skills Training.

## MONITORING PROGRESS:

- ☐ Is the target skill or behavior well defined?
- ☐ Is the target skill or behavior measurable and observable?
- ☐ Can the learner demonstrate the behavior?
- ☐ Is there an increase in spontaneously used target behaviors (initiations, responses) with peers?
- ☐ Is there a decrease in inappropriate social and communication behaviors?
- ☐ Is there an increase in the use of target skills with new social partners in social settings?
- ☐ Are there improved conversations between peers and learner on the spectrum (range of topics, length of conversations)?
- ☐ Are related IFSP or IEP goals achieved?
- ☐ Has enough time been devoted to using SST?
- ☐ Is a consistent format used for each session?
- ☐ Are instructional strategies being used consistently?
- ☐ Are reinforcers used that are motivating to the learner?
- ☐ Is SST used with fidelity? (Use the SST Implementation Checklist to determine fidelity.)

# STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

This step-by-step practice guide outlines how to plan for, use, and monitor Social Skills Training.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

Each of the following points is important to address so that you can be sure Social Skills Training is likely to address the target goal/behavior/skill of your learner on the spectrum.



## HAVE YOU FOUND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT...?

- ☐ Identifying the behavior...?
- ☐ Collecting baseline data through direct observation...?
- ☐ Establishing a target goal or outcome that clearly states when the behavior will occur, what the target goal or outcome is, and how team members and/or observers will know when the skill is mastered...?

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'No,' review the process of how to select an appropriate EBP (<https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/selecting-EBP>).

For more information about Social Skills Training, please visit <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/>.

## STEP 1: PLANNING FOR SST

The planning step details the initial steps and considerations involved to prepare for using Social Skills Training with a learner on the spectrum.

### 1. Determine if training will be 1-on-1 or a group

Decide if the training will be conducted in an individual or group format based upon various factors including the skills and developmental level of the learner, the availability of the trainer, availability of space, and scheduling constraints.

### 2. Select peers for participation

To select peers for participation, consider the grade level and needs of other potential participants. Also, determine if peer models will be included.

Keep in mind that **Social Skills Training** can occur with with an individual learner on the spectrum or in a group format.



### 3. Conduct social skills assessment

Use informal and/or formal assessment methods to obtain more information about a learner's current social competence as well as areas of need.

### 4. Select content of lessons

Consider the needs of the learner and group members (if a group format was selected). Remember large topics of instruction might include underlying components to the skill that will need to be addressed as well.

### 5. Determine format structure

SST should have a common format for each session. At a minimum, the lesson format should include a check in, introduction and teaching of a new skill, practice of the new skill, feedback, and opportunities to practice new skill outside of lesson format.

### 6. Select instructional strategies to use

A variety of instructional strategies can be used to teach social skills including direct instruction of skills, modeling, video modeling, role play, prompting, reinforcement, facilitated practice, and use of visual cues.

### 7. Prepare materials

Before you begin social skills training, you will need to prepare the materials. If you have selected any curriculum to support instruction, you will need to obtain those materials.

### 8. Prepare Instructors and adults to assist with training

Before beginning to use SST make sure all adults who will be leaders are familiar with the lesson plans and the reward system planned for participants.

### 9. Determine meeting place and schedule

A meeting time and place for the training needs to be selected that is convenient for both the learners, other members, and the leader.


 Use the **Planning Checklist** to help you plan for SST.

## STEP 2: USING SST

This step details the process of implementing Social Skills Training with a learner on the spectrum.

### 1. Implement the training as planned

Refer back to the plan for instruction or the Planning Checklist. Consider creating session guides to plan for individual lessons.

 Use the **Lesson Plan** to help you plan for specific training sessions.

### 2. Reinforce learner use of target skills

Reinforce learner's use of new target skills or behaviors. Select items or activities that are reinforcing to the learner.

### 3. Support generalization of target skills

Make a plan to support a learner in generalizing skills learned in the training sessions to other settings, people, and activities.

### 4. Provide support to peer models if applicable

Adult leaders should provide time for peers to become familiar with the learner, review the goals and format of the training session with peers, and provide specific suggestions of what is expected from peers.


## STEP 3: MONITORING SST

The following step details how to monitor the use of Social Skills Training with a learner on the spectrum and how to determine next steps based on the data.

### 1. Collect and analyze data

It is important to continuously collect and review data with the SST team. Collect data on:

- setting of observation
- sensory experiences available in the setting by modality
- learner's response to sensory stimuli
- level of prompting needed for learner to participate in that sensory setting
- other SSTs or strategies used to support the learner

 Use the **Data Collection** forms to monitor learner(s) progress.

### 2. Determine next steps based on learner progress

Collecting data will help team members decide about the effectiveness of using Social Skills Training and whether the learner on the spectrum is making progress. If a learner is making progress based upon data collected, team members should continue to use the selected strategies.

If team members determine that the learner is not making progress, consider the following:

- Is the target skill or behavior well defined?
- Is the target skill or behavior measurable and observable?
- Has enough time been devoted to using selected SST strategy (intensity and duration)?
- Is SST used with fidelity? (Use the SST Implementation Checklist to determine fidelity.)
- Is a consistent format used for each session?
- Are instructional strategies being used consistently?
- Are reinforcers used that are motivating to the learner?

If these issues have been addressed and the learner on the spectrum continues not to show progress, consider selecting a different evidence-based practice to use with the learner on the spectrum.

# IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

## BEFORE YOU START, HAVE YOU...?

- ☐ Identifying the target goal/behavior/skill...?
- ☐ Collecting baseline data through direct observation...?
- ☐ Establishing a target goal or outcome that clearly states when the behavior will occur, what the target goal or outcome is, and how team members and/or observers will know when the skill is mastered...?

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'No,' review the process of how to select an appropriate EBP (<https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/selecting-EBP>).

Observation:		1	2	3	4	5
Date:						
Observer's Initials:						
<b>STEP 1: PLANNING</b>						
1.1	Determine if training will be 1-on-1 or a group					
1.2	Select peer(s) for participation if applicable					
1.3	Conduct social skills assessment					
1.4	Select content of lessons					
1.5	Determine format structure					
1.6	Select instructional strategies to use					
1.7	Prepare materials					
1.8	Prepare instructors and adults to assist with training					
1.9	Determine meeting place and schedule					
<b>STEP 2: USING</b>						
2.1	Implement the training as planned					
2.2	Reinforce learner(s) use of target skills					
2.3	Support generalization of target skills to other settings/people/activities					
2.4	Provide support to peer models if applicable					
<b>STEP 3: MONITORING</b>						
3.1	Collect and analyze data					
3.3	Determine next steps based on learner progress					

# TIP SHEET FOR PROFESSIONALS

## SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING ...

- Is an evidence-based practice for children and youth on the spectrum from 0-22 years old.
- Can be conducted individually or with a group and provides adult-directed instruction in which social skills are targeted for improvement



## WHY USE WITH LEARNERS ON THE SPECTRUM?

- SST has been found to be effective in improving the social competence of learners.
- SST can incorporate a variety of instructional strategies such as modeling, video-modeling, role-play, prompting, and reinforcement
- SST can promote generalization of skills through facilitated practice with feedback.

### TIPS:

- Select instructional strategies such as video-modeling, social narratives, prompting, and reinforcement to assist in teaching selected target behavior/skill during a training session.
- Outline the format and structure of training sessions.
- Create opportunities for learner to practice skills in a variety of settings to increase generalization.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES:

The evidence-base for Social Skills Training supports its use to address the following outcomes, according to age range, in the table below:

Age	Adaptive	Behavior	Cognitive	Communication	Mental Health	Play	School Readiness	Self-determination	Social
0-2				Yes		Yes			Yes
3-5		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes			Yes
6-11	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12-14	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
15-18	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes
19-22									Yes



## STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING:

### 1. PLAN

- Determine if training will be 1-on-1 or a group
- Select peer(s) for participation if applicable
- Conduct social skills assessment
- Select content of lessons
- Determine format structure
- Select instructional strategies to use
- Prepare materials
- Prepare instructors and adults to assist with training
- Determine meeting place and schedule

### 2. USE

- Implement the training as planned
- Reinforce learner(s) use of target skills
- Support generalization of target skills to other settings/people/activities

### 3. MONITOR

- Collect and analyze data
- Determine next steps based on learner progress



### Social Skills Training SST

This sheet was designed as a supplemental resource to provide basic information about Social Skills Training for professionals working with learners on the spectrum.

For more information about this selected evidence-based practice, please visit <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/>.





# PARENT'S GUIDE

## WHAT IS SST?

- SST is an evidence-based practice for children and youth on the spectrum from 0 to 22 years old.
- SST includes any adult-directed instruction in which social skills are targeted for improvement.
- SST can occur in either a group or individual format.



## WHY USE THIS SST WITH MY CHILD?

- SST can be used to increase social interactions, play skills, regulation of emotions, perspective-taking, and communication skills
- Research studies have shown that social skills training has been used effectively to achieve outcomes in the following areas: adaptive/self-help, behavior, cognitive, communication, mental health, play, school readiness, self-determination, and social

## WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN I DO AT HOME?

- Provide opportunities for your child to practice social interactions through role plays. For example, role play with your child saying, "hello," to a peer or asking a peer a question.
- Provide reinforcements (such as time with a favorite toy or an activity) for your child using appropriate social behaviors.
- Create opportunities for your child to practice social skills with peers through activities such as a sports team, church group, or play group.

### Social Skills Training SST



This parent introduction to SST was designed as a supplemental resource to help answer questions about Social Skills Training.

To find out more about how this SST is being used with your child, please talk with:

For more information about this selected evidence-based practice, please visit <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/>.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### APPS:

Icon	Developer	Name	Available	Pricing
	Model Me Kids, LLC	<i>Model Me Going Places 2</i>	iPad	Free
	Model Me Kids, LLC	<i>Autism Emotion</i>	iPad	Free

### BOOKS:

- Baker, J. (2023). *Social Skills Training: for Children & Adolescents with Autism & Social-Communication Differences*. Future Horizons.
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# CEC STANDARDS

## INITIAL PRACTICE-BASED STANDARDS FOR EARLY INTERVENTIONISTS/EARLY CHILDHOOD (0-5 YEARS; CEC, 2020)

### **Standard 6: Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction**

- 6.2 Engage in reciprocal partnerships with families and other professionals to facilitate responsive adult-child interactions, interventions, and instruction in support of child learning and development.
- 6.3 Engage in ongoing planning and use flexible and embedded instructional and environmental arrangements and appropriate materials to support the use of interactions, interventions, and instruction addressing developmental and academic content domains, which are adapted to meet the needs of each and every child and their family.
- 6.4 Promote young children's social and emotional competence and communication, and proactively plan and implement function-based interventions to prevent and address challenging behaviors.
- 6.6 Use responsive interactions, interventions, and instruction with sufficient intensity and types of support across activities, routines, and environments to promote child learning and development and facilitate access, participation, and engagement in natural environments and inclusive settings.

## INITIAL PRACTICE-BASED STANDARDS FOR (GRADES K-12; CEC, 2020):

### **Standard 6: Supporting Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Growth**

- 6.1 Use effective routines and procedures to create safe, caring, respectful, and productive learning environments for individuals with exceptionalities.
- 6.2 Use a range of preventive and responsive practices documented as effective to support individuals' social, emotional, and educational well-being.
- 6.3 Systematically use data from a variety of sources to identify the purpose or function served by problem behavior to plan, implement, and evaluate behavioral interventions and social skills programs, including generalization to other environments.



## GLOSSARY

**Baseline data** - data collected on current performance level prior to implementation of intervention

**Concept Mastery** - This instructional technique uses visual diagrams to teach social concepts, defining characteristics, and providing examples/non-examples while encouraging learner input.

**Cue** - signals the learner to perform the skill.

**Direct Instruction (DI)** - A systematic approach to teaching using a sequenced instructional package with scripted protocols or lessons. It emphasizes teacher and student dialogue through choral and independent student responses and employs systematic and explicit error corrections to promote mastery and generalization.

**Facilitated Practice/Practice with Feedback** - Structured opportunities for learners to practice social skills with direct guidance and corrective feedback.

**Fidelity** - how well and how often the implementation steps for an evidence-based practice are followed

**Frequency system** - data collection system, appropriate when the frequency of the behavior needs to be increased or decreased

**Generalization** - when the target skill or behavior continues to occur when the intervention ends, in multiple settings, and with multiple individuals (e.g., peers, teachers, parents)

**Implementation checklist** - the specific steps needed to accurately follow an evidence-based practice.

**Individualized intervention:** an intervention that is planned and implemented in a way specific to the learner receiving the intervention

**Material reinforcers** - Motivating to the learner, but team members should vary these reinforcers with prompts but so learners do not grow tired of them.

**Modeling (MD)** - Demonstration of a desired target behavior that results in use of the behavior by the learner and that leads to the acquisition of the target behavior.

**Natural reinforcer** - occur naturally as a result of using the target behavior or skill.

**Peer** - classmate of learner on the spectrum.

**Peer-Based Instruction & Intervention (PBII)** - peers directly promote autistic children's social interactions and/or other individual learning goals, or the teacher/ other adult organizes the social context (e.g., play groups, social network groups, recess) and when necessary provides support (e.g., prompts, reinforcement) to the autistic children and their peer to engage in social interactions.

**Positive reinforcement** - refers to the presentation of a reinforcer after a learner uses a target skill/behavior, therefore encouraging them to perform that behavior again.

**Prompt** - any help provided that will assist the learner in using specific skills. Prompts can be verbal, gestural, or physical.



**Prompting (PP)** - Verbal, gestural, or physical assistance given to learners to support them in acquiring or engaging in a targeted behavior or skill.

**Reinforcement (R)** - The application of a consequence following a learner's use of a response or skills that increases the likelihood that the learner will use the response/skills in the future.

**Reinforcers** - increase the likelihood that the target skill/behavior will be used again in the future.

**Role-play** - Involves acting out social scenarios in a structured environment to help learners practice appropriate responses and behaviors.

**Script** - Provide prompts for use of a strategy or target behavior/skill.

**Social Narratives (SN)** - Interventions that describe social situations to highlight relevant features of a target behavior or skill and offer examples of appropriate responding.

**Social reinforcer** - found in any setting but might need to be taught to learners if these reinforcers are not inherently reinforcing. Examples include facial expressions, words, and phrases ("Good job!").

**Social Skills Training (SST)** - Group or individual instruction designed to teach learners ways to participate in their interactions appropriately and successfully with others.

**Structured Play Groups** - a type of peer-based instruction and intervention that trains peers to provide social support to learner within an inclusive environment.

**Target behavior** - the behavior or skill that is the focus of the intervention. Behavior may need to be increased or decreased.

**Token economy** - a type of positive reinforcement where learners earn tokens which can be used to acquire desired reinforcers.

**Training session** - learners receive instruction about various social behaviors and use role plays with the adult trainer and other peers.

**Unprompted incorrect response** - learner attempts to use the target skill/behavior without prompts but performs it incorrectly.

**Verbal prompt** - includes any spoken words directed to learners to help them perform a target skill correctly. Verbal prompts range in intensity level from least to most restrictive.

**Video Modeling (VM)** - A video-recorded demonstration of the targeted behavior or skill shown to the learner to assist learning in or engaging in a desired behavior or skill.

**Visual prompt** - a picture, icon or object used to provide learners with information about how to perform the target skill or behavior.

**Visual Supports (VS)** A visual display that supports the learner engaging in a desired behavior or skills independent of additional prompts





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