

## 7 to 8: Finding Friends

The tightest relationships in this age group are based on shared interests.

By [Michelle Anthony, PhD](#) | June , 2009

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**When your child was younger**, he likely rattled off the names of many different kids he played with—possibly a different one every day. Now you probably hear fewer names more regularly. At this stage, although children still play in large groups, they will often have one pal they call their best friend. While several playmates may hold this coveted title over the course of a year, your child's number one buddy is always magical to him. Sometimes, parents become wary when children are invested in just one friendship. But a child's desire for a best friend is a natural milestone that you can heartily endorse.

### Friendship Foundations

Not surprisingly, most best friends are the same gender and have a similar communication style: Girls often interact more quietly, using language that revolves around shared storylines. Boys tend to talk in shorter, goal-directed sentences that refer to physical actions.

At this stage, when children become involved in sustained, ongoing relationships with select peers, they choose best friends based on two characteristics: activity and skill level.

**Activity:** At a younger age, being close is enough for kids to become friends. Now, what you play and how you play matters more. Girls tend to prefer activities like jump rope, art projects, and dress-up. For boys, sports, trading cards, and video games are favorites.

**Skill level:** As your child becomes skilled at an activity, she'll develop confidence. This sense of power attracts peers and makes them seek her as a best friend. Children who struggle at an activity may feel inferior—at least in that venue—and hang back. If your child loves a game but has trouble with it, support him as he develops mastery. He'll first make friends at his own skill level, and his growing confidence will help him to make more.

Most often best buds share a specific interest. While your child can make friends by learning a new activity, it is often better to encourage her to find friends while following her own passions.

### About the Author

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