

Development of Peer Relations

M I L E S T O N E S

Age	Peer Sociability	Peer Groups	Peer Socialization
Birth–2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated social acts increase over the first year and are gradually replaced by coordinated interaction. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the end of this period, peer reinforcement and modeling are evident.
2½–6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the beginning of this period, children use words to affect a peer's behavior. Parallel play appears, remains stable from 3 to 6 years, and becomes more cognitively mature. Cooperative play increases—especially sociodramatic play. Rough-and-tumble play emerges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dominance hierarchies emerge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer modeling and reinforcement increase.
7–11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer communication skills improve, including interpreting and responding to the emotions and intentions of others. Ability to understand the complementary roles of several players improves, permitting the transition to rule-oriented games. Peer interaction becomes more prosocial, and aggression (in the form of physical attacks) declines. Rough-and-tumble play becomes more common. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer groups with distinct norms and social structures emerge. Dominance hierarchies become more stable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As children internalize social rules, peer modeling declines.
12–20 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer interaction becomes more cooperative. Rough-and-tumble play declines. More time is spent with peers than with any other partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer groups become more tightly knit and exclusive, organized around cliques. Large, loosely organized crowds form, based on reputation and stereotype. As interest in dating increases, mixed-sex cliques form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conformity to peer pressure increases and gradually declines.



Note: These milestones represent overall age trends. Individual differences exist in the precise age at which each milestone is attained.