I’ve never met a parent who didn’t hope their child would gather a comforting circle of friends to rely upon and enjoy. Friendship skills come naturally to some children; but for others, it takes a bit more practice. One very effective way of helping children grasp the dynamics of friendship is to read stories together. So below I list children’s books that deal with friendship. The children’s books can also remind you, as an adult, how children think about friendship. Understanding their perspective can help you guide children more sensitively and wisely.

The books can be obtained in a variety of ways, including from booksellers, public libraries, or your child care center’s lending library. Some of the classics and more recent releases may be included in your child’s classroom book club offerings (such as Scholastic, Trumpet, or Troll). Consider sharing this list with family members who want good book ideas for children’s holiday gifts; they’ll appreciate the help.

Once you land your hands on some of these gems, read the books as often as your child wishes. New reflections — and questions — will arise with each reading. Examining a story character’s behavior can be a safe, objective way for children to consider and analyze how friendships are formed and maintained. After ending a story, ask your child why the characters were friends. How did they become friends? How did they settle arguments? Your child might even want to be creative with the story line. Ask your child how the story ending might change, for better or worse, if characters behaved or talked differently. Responses will give you an amazing view of your child’s perspective, maturation, and growth.

At the end of this list of children’s books, I also cite books written for parents and teachers. Each examines the influence friendship has on development and can give you tips on nurturing children’s friendship potential. Enjoy the discovery.

**Children’s Books for Preschoolers to Age 8**

- *Best Friends* by Marcia Leonard (Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 1999).
- *Duck on a Bike* by David Shannon (New York: Scholastic, 2002).
- *Friends* by Helme Heine (New York: Simon & Schuster Children's, 1982).
- *Let's Be Friends Again!* by Helen Willem (New York: Scholastic, 1986).
- *Now One Foot, Now the Other* by Tomie de Paola (New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1981).
- *We are Best Friends* by Aliki (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1982).
Books of Interest to Parents and Teachers

• *Building Healthy Friendships: Teaching Friendship Skills to Young People* by Terry Beck (Saratoga, CA: R & E Publishers, 1994).

Books Written Specifically for Early Childhood Teachers

• *Guiding Children’s Social Development* by Marjorie Kostelnik, et.al. (Albany, NY: Delmar Press, 1993).
• *Promoting the Social Development of Young Children* by Charles Smith (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1982).

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